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LORD BOLINGBROKE'S
Philosophical Works.

VOL. IV.

T H E
PHILOSOPHICAL
W O R K S

Of the late Right Honorable

E N R Y S^{T.} J O H N,

LORD VISCOUNT BOLINGBROKE,

V O L U M E IV.

Printed in the Year MDCCLXXVI.

FRAGMENTS OR MINUTES

OF

E S S A Y S.

VI.

LET us take things then as we find them; more curious to know what is, than to imagine what may be. Let us turn our eyes on ourselves, and consider how we are made. We shall not find either the immediate or mediate illumination, that is supposed to come to us from without, and independently on which it is supposed that the human mind can exercise no act of intelligence: but we shall find that there is such a thing as natural reason implanted in us by the author of our nature, whose progress and operations are known to us intuitively, and by the help of which we are able to acquire, not only moral, but every other human science.

EXPERIENCE and observation require time; and reason, that collects from them, and is improved by them, comes slowly to our assistance. It would come too slowly, and want much of the power it has, weak and imperfect as that is, to regulate the conduct of human life, if the all-wise Creator had not implanted in us another principle, that of

self-love, which is the original spring of human actions, under the direction of instinct first, and of reason afterwards. The first direction is common to all animals, even to those that microscopes alone can make visible to the eye. The second we say is peculiar to man; and so we may say properly enough, whether we conceive this faculty in man and beast to be wholly different in kind, or whether we conceive it to be vastly transcendent in man.

“ *Homo animans quidem est*,” GROTIUS speaks*, “ *sed eximum animans, multoque longius distans a cæteris omnibus, quam cæterorum genera inter se distant.*” I do not take this proposition to be entirely true. It is impossible to observe the rest of the animal kind, and not discern, in many of them, certain actions and rules of conduct that denote not only a more extensive and surer instinct than we are conscious of, but something that appears rather a lower degree of reason, than a higher degree of instinct; if we are able by observation alone, and without any communication of their ideas, to distinguish so accurately. In all cases, and in what manner soever it has been ordered by infinite wisdom, there would be no difficulty in refuting, by particular facts, the general assertion of GROTIUS, nor in shewing that the difference in this respect, between some men and some other animals, is naturally less than that between different species of animals, and even

* *De jure bel. et pac. Proleg.*

between

between animals of one species, between man and man at least. Superior beings, who look down on our intellectual system, will not find, I persuade myself, so great a distance between a gascon petit maître and a monkey, or a german philosopher and an elephant, whatever partiality we may have for our own species, as they will find between those men who are born to instruct, and those who are born incapable of instruction. GROTIUS might have allowed other animals much more intelligence than he did ; though he allows them in a note, and on the authority of PHILO and others, a little more than in his text. What the authorities of antient authors signify in a matter so notorious, and so much within the observation of every age, I know not. But I know still less what he means, when he says, “ *quod in illis quidem pro-
cedere credimus ex principio aliquo intelligente
extrinseco, quia circa actus alios istis neutiquam
difficiliores par intelligentia in illis non appetet.* ” If he had said, from an inward principle, “ *ex principio intrinseco,* ” as he has been made to say in some editions, he would have been intelligible, and would have meant very plainly a directing instinct, or a reasoning faculty, much inferior to that of man, and variously implanted in the animal kind, to direct their actions to their different ends : but this would have been inconsistent with his argument, and he would have contradicted himself. He said therefore “ *ex principio extrinseco :* ” and what could he mean by that ? An outward force that impels or restrains

them, and directs their conduct occasionally, but not uniformly? This would be too absurd. Could he mean that immediate or mediate illumination from above, which the rabbins speak of, and suppose that animals receive from thence the intelligence they want, in certain cases, to fulfil the law of their nature; whilst they are left destitute of any intelligence, in others? This would be still more absurd. Might it not be deemed profane too among those, who fear to prostitute the divine action, as men who make hypotheses in theology and philosophy are apt to do?

THE surest way of avoiding such absurdities is to be neither dogmatical, nor even over curious; and there is the less temptation to be either, on this subject, because the principles of the obligation of natural law, as far as we are concerned to know them, are extremely obvious. Instinct precedes reason in man. It supplies the want, or the imperfection of it in other animals. Should we venture to refine a little further on appearances, we might guess, that as the reason of man grows up out of habitual instinct, by experience and observation; so does that faculty, which I fear we must call by the same name in beasts. Some of these have instinct and reason far above others; and man has reason far above them all: because tho' they have senses more acute than men very often, and several, perhaps, of which we have no ideas; yet the very contrary is true as to mental faculties, which are plainly less imperfect, and more

more numerous in us than in them. They perceive ideas both simple and complex that come in by the senses, and they retain them too, as we do. That they compare these ideas, in some degree, is certain. How far they compound them, by any intellectual operation, I much doubt. But this seems to be out of doubt, that they want totally the great instrument of human knowledge. I do not say abstraction, which I take to be, as it is understood, a mere *ens rationis*, and to deny them which, is to deny them nothing; but I mean the wide extended power of generalising the ideas they have, without which there can be no ratiocination, nor knowledge sufficient to constitute moral agents.

As divines have impudently, and wickedly, assumed (give me leave to use on this occasion, which deserves it if any can, the style they employ on every dispute) that there is a law of right reason common to God and man; so lawyers have advanced, most absurdly, that the law of nature is common to man and beast. " *Jus naturale* " *est*," say the compilers of the Digest, " *quod natura omnia animalia docuit*. Nam *jus istud non humani generis proprium, sed omnium animalium*," etc.

THAT the history and law of Moses is favorable to this opinion likewise, and that beasts, as well as men, are represented and treated therein as accountable creatures, must not be denied, what-

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ever shifts and evasions commentators have invented. God is made to say, in the ixth chapter of Genesis, speaking to Noah and his children, “ sanguinem animarum vestiarum requiram de manu cunctarum bestiarum, et de manu hominis,” etc. The text is plain. Shall it be evaded by saying, on some rabbinical authority, that the antediluvian tyrants kept wild beasts to destroy men? and if they did so, who was to suffer, the tyrant or the beast? Not the beast certainly, unless they had both the same law: and yet the beast was accountable by it, as well as the tyrant. Thus again, in the xiiith of Deuteronomy, God is made to say in the supposed case of idolatry. . . . “ percuties habitatores urbis illius in ore gladii, et delebis eam ac omnia quæ in illa sunt, usque ac pecora.” Will it be sufficient to say that this order was given to shew the heinousness of a crime, by the punishment of creatures who neither were, nor could be guilty of it? Among the judgments denounced, in Leviticus, against those who should copulate with beasts, the punishment is to be inflicted on the beast as well as on the man or woman. “ Qui cum jumento et pecore coierit morte moriatur: pecus quoque occidite. Mulier quæ succubuerit cuilibet jumento simul interficietur cum eo: sanguis eorum sit super eos.” The Jews are said to have dispensed with this punishment, when the boy was under nine, and the girl under three years of age: because they did not suppose children so young to be capable of such pollution. But was

the

the beast that copulated with a man or a woman, at any age, capable of knowing the crime? Mr. SELDEN brings a passage or two out of the Misna, to shew that the beast was not put to death for sinning against any laws but in order to blot out the memory of so great a scandal. He adds, that the death of the beast was deemed a punishment on the owner, who should have kept him with greater care; and from hence he concludes “*adeo ut poenam ob jus aliquod violatum ad bestiam attinere neutiquam ulla tenus admittant, nec jure aliquo eam teneri.*” But it will not be hard to prove, from what Mr. SELDEN* himself admits in this very chapter, that the Jews made beasts accountable, like moral agents, whatever their rabbins might pretend to mitigate the absurdity. The Sadducees brought some such accusation against them. MAIMONIDES answers it by denying that the beast, who had killed a man, was put to death, “*ad poenam ab illa exigendam.*” He was put to death, “*ad poenam exigendam a domino;*” for it was not lawful to eat the goaring ox, after he had been stoned. But if this was so, how came the ox to escape when he had killed a Gentile, and to be stoned irremissibly when he had killed a Jew? How came the same rule to be observed in the case of beastiality? In short is it not plain, and would it not be allowed to be so, in the case of any other nation, that the Jews imagined the law of nature to be common

* Lib. i. c. 4.

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to man and beast; that they understood and executed their own law accordingly; and that, notwithstanding the distinction made between the law of the Gentiles and the law of the Jews with respect to the punishment, they must have proceeded in the cases here mentioned without any principle at all, or on this principle, that beasts are by nature accountable for crimes, and even able to discern between the greater crime and the less? I know nothing more absurd than this, except a custom or law at Athens, that was however less cruel. The weapons by which a murther had been committed were brought into court, as if they too were liable to punishment; and the statue that had killed a man by it's fall was, by a solemn sentence of that wise people the Thasii, founded on a law DRACO, cast into the sea.

THE principle of this jurisprudence cannot be reconciled to right reason. But the definition of the Roman lawyers may be shewn to be rather too short, than false. As far as an instinct, common to all animals, directs the conduct of men, this instinct may be called the law of nature, and this law may be called the law of the whole kind. But in the human species, where instinct ceases, reason is given to direct; a second table is added to the first, and both together compose the law of nature relatively to man. Instinct and reason may be conceived as different promulgations of the same law; one made of a part only by nature herself, immediately and universally; the other marked out

out by her in the whole extent of the law, and to be collected from these marks or notices by reason, which is right or wrong as it promulgates agreeably to them or not.

THERE is a sort of genealogy of law, in which nature begets natural law, natural law sociability, sociability union of societies by consent, and this union by consent the obligation of civil laws. When I make sociability the daughter of natural law, and the granddaughter of nature, I mean plainly this. Self-love, the original spring of human actions, directs us necessarily to sociability. The same determination of nature appears in other animals. They all herd with those of their own species, with whom they sympathise more; whose language, perhaps, whether it consists in signs or sounds, they understand better; and from whom, if individuals do not receive much good, they may have less evil to apprehend. This instinct operates, at least, as strongly in man. I shall not contradict what TULLY says in his offices *, that if we were not sociable "propter necessitatem" "vitae," on account of our mutual wants, if they were all supplied by providence and without any human help, "quasi virgula divina," yet still we should fly absolute solitude, and seek human conversation. I believe we should. But even in this imaginary case, self-love would be the determining principle still. That friendships may be

* Lib. i. 44.

formed,

formed, and maintained, without any consideration of utility, I agree, and hope I have proved. There is a sort of intellectual sympathy, better felt than expressed, in characters, by which particular men are sometimes united sooner, and more intimately, than they could be by mere esteem, by expectation of good offices, or even by gratitude. I know not, to say it by the way, whether there is not a sort of corporal sympathy too, without the supposition of which it is impossible to account for the strong attachments which some men have had for the least tempting, and in all respects the least deserving women, and some women for the least tempting and least deserving men.

BUT this is not the case of general sociability. To account for that we have no need to recur to occult qualities. Instinct leads us to it, by a sense of pleasure: and reason, that, recalling the past, foresees the future, confirms us in it by a sense of happiness. Instinct is an inferior principle, and sufficient for the inferior ends to which other animals are directed. Reason is a superior principle, and sufficient for the superior ends to which mankind is directed. The necessities, the conveniences of life, and every agreeable sensation, are the objects of both. But happiness is a continued enjoyment of these, and that is an object proportioned to reason alone. Neither is obtained out of society; and sociability therefore is the foundation of human happiness. Society cannot be maintained without

without benevolence, justice, and the other moral virtues. These virtues, therefore, are the foundations of society: and thus men are led, by a chain of necessary consequences, from the instinctive to the rational law of nature, if I may speak so. Self-love operates in all these stages. We love ourselves, we love our families, we love the particular societies to which we belong, and our benevolence extends at last to the whole race of mankind. Like so many different vortices, the center of them all is self-love, and that which is the most distant from it is the weakest.

THIS will appear to be in fact the true constitution of human nature. It is the intelligible plan of divine wisdom. Man is able to understand it, and may be induced to follow it by the double motive of interest and duty. As to the first, real utility and right reason coincide. As to the last, since the author of our nature has determined us irresistibly to desire our own happiness, and since he has constituted us so, that private good depends on the public, and the happiness of every individual on the happiness of society, the practice of all the social virtues is the law of our nature, and made such by the will of God, who, having determined the end and proportioned the means, has willed that we should pursue one by the other. To think thus, is to think reasonably of man and of the law of his nature, as well as humbly and reverently of the Supreme Being. But to talk, like CUMBERLAND, of promoting the good

good of the whole system of rational agents, among whom God is included, and of human benevolence towards him, is to talk metaphysical jargon and theological blasphemy. He confesses that he uses these expressions in an improper sense, and explains, most unintelligibly to any man who has right conceptions of the majesty of the all-perfect Being, what he means. His meaning, which he takes from TULLY, and which TULLY took from the Stoicians, is expressed by the roman philosopher in the first book of his Laws. He says there, that "nothings is more divine than reason ; that "reason grown up to maturity and perfection is "called wisdom ; that nothing being better than "this reason, which is in man as well as in God, "the first society that man has is in this commu- "nity of reason with God ; that from this com- "munity of reason there arises a community of "law, so that the whole world is to be deemed "one city or state, composed of gods and men."** Much might be said to shew the absurdity and impertinence of such doctrines as these, and some reflections to this purpose have been made occasionally. But I content myself to observe here, how unnecessary these doctrines are to explain what the laws of nature are, and what the authority is by which they are made laws, even in the strictest sense of the word. We say, that the law of nature is the law of reason : and so it is in this sense,

* *Quum adolevit atque perfecta est.—Eaque et in homine et in Deo—Una civitas communis deorum atque hominum existimandus.* CIC. *De legib.*

and

and thus far. A right use of this faculty, which God has given us, collects this law from the nature of things, as they stand in the system which he has constituted. Reason can look no higher, nor will right reason attempt it; for surely no disquisition can be more vain and needless than that which examines whether actions are lawful or unlawful, “debiti aut illiciti,” because they are commanded or forbid by God; or whether they are such “per se,” independently on God, and therefore necessarily, “necessario,” commanded or forbidden by him. GROTIUS * adopts the last of these notions: and the general current of metaphysical refinement runs that way. It assumes in man a community of reason with God, and then it seems consequential to assume, that men, such men at least as these reasoners imagine themselves to be, are able to discern natures and to judge of things antecedently to actual existence, and abstractedly from it; whereas, perhaps, to think rightly, we must think that these natures and things, considered abstractedly from the manner and the relations in which they exist, are nothing better than imaginary entities, objects of ill-chosen speculation, not of knowledge. He who thinks thus will be apt to ask, what would become of justice if we supposed a system wherein there was no property; or what of temperance, if we supposed one wherein there could be no excess? Such questions, and many other objections, would not be easily answered: and the sole

* GROTIUS. *De jure bel. et pac. Lib. i. c. 1.*

effect

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effect of this hypothesis must be, as I think it has been, to render our notions of natural laws disputable and indeterminable in many cases. This disquisition is therefore not only vain but hurtful. It is needless too, absolutely needless; for will any man deny, that however indifferent actions may be *per se*, and simply considered, they cease to be so when they are connected with a system, and cannot be separated, not even in imagination, from the relations they bear to other parts of the system, nor from their effects on the whole? The system to which we belong, like every other system, was made by the will of God, and therefore all the natures contained in it, both physical and moral, were ordained by the same will. It has been said with shocking impiety, by schoolmen and others, that if things were made as they are by the mere will of God, and not according to the essential differences and eternal independent natures of things, God might have made our obligations by the law of nature to be contrary to what they are. He might have made it our duty to blaspheme not to adore him, and to exercise injustice not justice in our dealings with other men. But this is one instance, and not the least, of that habitual presumption which men contract in the schools of metaphysics and theology, where they are accustomed to reason about what infinite wisdom and power might, or should have done, instead of contending themselves to know what they have done, and pronouncing it, for that reason, fittest to be done. In creating man, God designed to

to create not only a rational, but a social creature, and a moral agent; and he has framed his nature accordingly. If he had designed this world to be the habitation of devils, he might have made us by nature what we say that they have made themselves by rebellion. But, as we ought not to presume to measure the divine perfections, nor the proceedings of infinite wisdom, by our scanty and precarious ideas, so it is worse than presumption to ascribe, even hypothetically, to the all-perfect Being any thing that is evidently repugnant to our ideas of perfection. Once more, therefore, let us be content to know things as God has been pleased to shew them to us, and to look no further than our nature for the law of it. In that, we shall find this law co-eval with our system, if not with the author, and as immutable as the system, if not as immutable as God.

THEY who affect to carry their search further, fall into different absurdities. Some are intent on such abstractions, as have been mentioned, abstractions of eternal essences, intelligible independent natures, by which both natural and moral differences were constituted before there was any natural or moral law, any natural or moral agents. Whilst these men pretend to consult the dictates of right reason, they leave reason no rule to go by. Every man assumes that his own is right: and ethics become as intricate, as uncertain, and as contentious a science, as theology. Whilst these men misapply and abuse their reason, there are those who seem to have no want of it in order to discover

discover the law of nature. They affirm that they have (and the sole proof in this case, as in the case of abstraction, is affirmation) a moral sense, that is, an instinct by which they distinguish what is morally good from what is morally evil, and perceive an agreeable or disagreeable intellectual sensation accordingly, without the trouble of observation and reflection. They bid fair to be enthusiasts in ethics, and to make natural religion as ridiculous, as some of their brothers have made revealed religion by insisting on the doctrine of an inward light.

THE last of these wild men, that I shall mention, are such as ANAXARCHUS, and our HOBBES. If the former had been guilty of nothing worse than that which GROTIUS lays to his charge, he would have been less liable to censure than GROTIUS himself. This great lawyer and divine distinguishes between the law of nature, and the positive law of God, or man. By the last, he understands a law of will *. By the first, a dictate of right reason †, that shews the moral turpitude ‡, or the moral necessity there is in every action, that is, a supposed morality, or immorality, independent on any positive law. Thus he distinguishes, and therefore blames ANAXARCHUS for speaking too indistinctly || of law. But this distinction must not pass for true. The law of

* *Jus voluntarium.*

† *Dictatum rectae rationis.*

‡ *Moralem turpitudinem, aut necessitatem moralem.*

|| *Nimium indistincte.*

nature, which he allows divine in one sense, is in every sense as much, as any other, a positive law of God, enacted as truly by the divine will, and promulgated by the divine authority not only as truly, but more evidently and more universally, as well as immutably. The fault of ANAXARCHUS lay here, that to flatter ALEXANDER when he had killed CLITUS †, he attributed to this prince the power that the poets attributed to JUPITER, the power to make particular and even occasional rules of right and wrong by will. The fault of HOBBES lay here, he put the Supreme Being out of the case entirely, ascribed no legislative authority or no exercise of it to him, assumed all actions to have been indifferent not only before our system was created, but even after it was so, and till the civil magistrate had made a difference between them by commanding some, and by forbidding others.

MANY such general and fundamental absurdities as these are to be found in the writings even of those who have writ with the most applause on this subject; besides a multitude of particular questions, as frivolous as any that the schoolmen ever broached. I pass them all by with the neglect that they deserve, except one; some further notice of which is necessary to connect with what has been said, and to carry on my train of thoughts.

† PLUT. in ALEXAN.

VII.

THE presumption of those, who pretend to deduce our moral obligation from the moral attributes of God, has so much theological authority on its side, that the absurdity of it cannot be too often exposed and censured. There is fraud too, which I did not observe before, in this pretension; and fraud so manifest, that we may sometimes suspect it to be wilful. Instead of transferring from God to man, to use a phrase of CICERO, they transfer from man to God; and whilst they boast that man is made after the image of God, they make God after the image of man. What they present to us for a copy, is the original; and what they present for the original, is in reality the copy. Tho' we rise from the knowledge of ourselves, and of the other works of God, to a knowledge of his existence and his wisdom and power, which we call infinite, because the sensible effects of them go far beyond our utmost conceptions of wisdom and power, yet we cannot rise thus to a knowledge of his manner of being, nor of his manner of producing those effects which give us ideas of wisdom and power; and as little, or less if possible, can we rise from our moral obligations to his supposed moral attributes. I call them supposed, because, after all that has been said to prove a necessary connection between his physical and his moral attributes, the latter may be all absorbed in his wisdom. It is even more agreeable

able to the phaenomena to believe that they are so, and that, his wisdom determining him to do always that which is fittest to be done upon the whole, of which fitness we are in no degree competent judges, the effects of it give us sometimes ideas of those moral qualities, which we acquire by reflection on ourselves or by our dealings with one another; and sometimes not. The works of God would give us ideas of wisdom and power, if human actions and operations gave us none; and, in fact, the example of savage nations will shew, I think, that the first and strongest impressions of this kind come from thence. But it is evident that the first and strongest impressions, that we receive of benevolence, justice, and other moral virtues, come from reflection on ourselves, and from our dealings with one another, from what we feel in ourselves, and from what we observe in other men. These we acknowledge to be, however limited and imperfect, the excellencies of our own nature, and therefore conceiving them without any limitations or imperfections, we ascribe them to the divine. We do worse: we ascribe our affections and passions to the divine nature. We make God so much a copy of man, that we design the worst, as well as the best, of our own features, if I may say so, in our representations of him: and, as common as it is, no unprejudiced thinking man can hear, without astonishment, our perfections and our imperfections imputed to the Supreme Being, in the same breath, and by the same men; with this difference, at

most, that the former are imputed directly, and the latter sometimes under the thin and trite veil of analogy. In a being thus constituted they may well imagine that the moral virtues are the same as they are in our ideas: and theology may easily deduce from his attributes the characters theology has given them. But a being thus constituted is not the supreme, the all-perfect Being: and a very short analyse of the excellencies of our own nature will be sufficient to shew that they cannot be applied from man to God without profaneness, nor from God to man without the most shameful absurdity. Let me allude, on this occasion, to a passage I have seen quoted from the Ethics of ARISTOTLE. To what actions of the divinity can we apply, or from what can we deduce our notions of human justice? Both might be done, perhaps, by those who assumed, like TULLY, community of gods and men, or by those who drew the divinity down to human conversations and human cares, to be immediately and, as we may say, personally an actor in human affairs, to be a contracting party in covenants and alliances with men. Nay, something of the same kind may be done by those who acknowledge the infinite wisdom of God, and yet include him in this system of rational agents, every one of which is obliged to promote the good of the whole; who acknowledge the infinite distance between God and man, and yet assert that they may be compared together on account of their rationality, and be said, not figuratively but literally,

literally, to be of the same mind. But how shall we deduce fortitude from the attributes of God, or ascribe this virtue to him who can endure no pain, nor be exposed to any danger? How temperance, when it would be the most horrid blasphemy to suppose him subject to any human appetites and passions, and much more to some so inordinate as to require a particular virtue to restrain and govern them? I might bring many more instances of the same kind. But these are enough: and he, who will not be convinced by these, how absurdly the laws of nature are founded, by some writers, in the moral attributes of God, will be convinced by none.

BUT now, as absurd as these doctrines are, we must not imagine that the law of nature wants any proofs of a divine sanction, or a divine original. They are both contained in one: and the punishment, which attends the breach of this law, results as necessarily, as the law itself, from that nature which God has been pleased to constitute according to his good pleasure. Let it not be said that this punishment is only temporal, and the sanction therefore insufficient. Let not this be said, particularly by those men, who talk so much of a positive law given by God to his chosen people, the sanction of which was no other than temporal pains and penalties. Let it not be objected further, that the penalties, which make the sanction of natural law, affect nations collectively, and not men individually; for which reason, they

are less proper to enforce the observation of the law. The penalties annexed to the breach of the law of Moses were of the same kind, in general, oppression, famine, pestilence, wars, and captivities: and when particular punishments were inflicted by virtue of this law, it did no more, than what is done every day and in all countries, with less tumult and with better order, in consequence of the law of nature, and for the preservation of society. Once more, let it not be objected, as it has been, that this law is not universally known. It is universally given, and if it is not known, and practised alike by all mankind, many of the first great principles of it are so in every human society, even in those of the least civilised people; whilst the far greatest part of the world are invincibly ignorant of the first principles of christianity, without the knowledge of which, and without faith in which, they are all condemned to eternal punishment.

INSTEAD of making objections so insufficient as these, and so liable to be retorted, let the same men confess that the divine institution of the law of nature rests on fuller and more convincing proofs, both external and internal, than any that have been found, or could be given, of the divine institution of christianity. The latter has all those which the manner in which it was revealed, and the nature of it, allowed it to have. But the manner in which the former has been revealed to mankind, as well as the matter of it, admitted of proofs

proofs of both kinds, much more evident, and much more proportioned to the human understanding. The good news of christianity was published by CHRIST and his apostles; it was confirmed by miracles, and the proof was no doubt sufficient for the conversion of all those who heard the publication of this doctrine, and saw the confirmation of it. One can only wonder that any such remained unconvinced. But this proof became, in a very little time, traditional and historical; and one might be allowed to wonder how the effect of it continued, and increased too, as the force of it diminished, if the reasons of this phaenomenon were not obvious in history. Nay, tho' they are so, one may still wonder why they, who propagate christianity, have not met oftener with the answer which ETHELRED, the Saxon king, made to AUGUSTINE, “ I cannot “ abandon the religion of my fathers for one “ that you would persuade me to receive on the “ authority of persons quite unknown to me.” He came however afterwards to a better sense, either by the supernatural effects of grace, or by the natural effects of the cajolement or importunity, perhaps, of BERTHE. The revelation of the law of nature is of another kind. Whether the word of God is his word, may be, and we see has been, disputed by theists. But whether his works are his works, neither has been, nor can be, disputed by any such. Natural religion therefore being founded on human nature, the work of God, and on the necessary conditions of human

happiness which are imposed by the whole system of it, every man who receives the law of nature receives it on his own authority, and not on the authority of other men known or unknown, and in their natural state as fallible as himself. The revelation is not communicated to him only by tradition and history: it is a perpetual, a standing revelation, always made, always making, and as present in these days, as in the days of ADAM, to all his offspring. The external proofs then, for these are properly such, of the divine institution of the law of nature, are conclusive to every theist. Let us examine the internal, and compare them with the proofs that are contained in, or deduced from, the scriptures, to shew their divine original.

VIII.

NO Wth the unwritten law of God, unwritten even in the hearts of men, how early soever instinct disposes them to receive it, is an object of knowledge, not of belief. We know that God exists, with a certainty little inferior to that which we have of our own existence. We know that he has given us a law of our nature, with as great a certainty as inward consciousness and outward observation can give us: and by these means, by which we acquire all other science, it is in the power of every rational creature to acquire as much of this science as the ends of his being make it necessary that he should. Natural law is found-

ed in reason, which every creature, that has it, may exercise; and the creature, that has it not, is not subject to the law. Christianity is founded in faith; and faith proceeds from grace. He, who has not faith, cannot fulfil a law that consists, at least, as much in believing as in practising: and whether he shall have grace, or no, does not depend on him. Thus the difference between the internal proofs of the two laws stands in one respect. The contents of the law of nature are objects of such a certainty as the author of nature alone can communicate. The contents of the whole christian system, laid down in our scriptures, are objects of such a probability as may force assent very reasonably, in this case, without doubt; although a concurrence of various circumstances, improved by the credulity of some men and the artifice of others, has forced this assent in cases not very dissimilar, and wherein it would have been more reasonably withheld. The difference here stated, between the manifestations of the will of God to man in the law of nature, and in every other law, is so true, that every other law is controlled by it, and could not pass for the law of God if it was seen to be repugnant to the former. To say nothing of the law given to ADAM, nor of that given to NOAH, according to the JEWS, all orthodox writers think themselves obliged to hold, for the honour of the mosaical law, not only that there is nothing contrary to the natural law enjoined by it, "id quod ea lege praecipitur non esse contra jus naturae," as GROTIUS says,

says *, but also that all the obligations of the natural law are contained in it, “ *contineri quidem in sacro illo corpore seu pentateucho*,” as Mr. SELDEN says ; though he owns at the same time, that much chemical skill is necessary to extract them from it. That the christian law is nothing else than the law of nature, enforced by a new revelation, every friend to christianity admits, and the worst of its enemies dares not deny, though he denies the reality of the revelation.

ANOTHER internal proof of the divine original of the law of nature is the plainness and simplicity, which renders it intelligible in all times and all places alike, and proportions it to the meanest understanding. It has been made intricate by casuistry, that of lawyers and that of divines, as christian religion has been by theology. But there is a considerable difference between the two cases. The first principles of natural religion are so simple and plain, that casuistry has no apparent pretence to meddle with them, no more than it would have if it pretended to teach us to see things that lie obvious before us, at a just distance, and exactly proportioned to our sight. These principles want neither paraphrase nor commentary, to be sufficiently understood ; whereas the very first principles of christian religion, concerning the fall and redemption of man, are so veiled in mystery of language, that without a comment, or with one, and even with that of St. PAUL, they give us

* Lib. i. c. 1. *De jure bel. et pac.*

no clear and distinct ideas, nor any thing more than forms of speech and words to pronounce. They who under this pretence, such as it is, introduce reason where reason has nothing to do, explain what revelation has left unexplained, and define articles of faith which are either defined in the word of God, or which no mortal has any right to define, introduce afterwards their theology, under the name of moral theology, where that has nothing to do, and corrupt the unwritten law of God even with less pretence than they corrupted the written. I charge this double corruption upon them the more boldly, because every one, who is in the least conversant in their writings, is able to bring numerous instances of both, and to shew, that I may keep to my present subject, how they have established doctrines, and decided cases of conscience, in direct opposition to the most known and the most sacred duties of natural religion, till they have rendered men infinitely worse than they would have been in HOBSES's state of nature, without any religion or law whatever. Two things alone have checked this torrent of iniquity, to some degree. The first has been the interposition of the civil power. The second has been the insuperable difficulty of determining men, generally and constantly, and out of some peculiar circumstances, to violate the laws of their nature, as individuals, or as members of society, by precept, by example, or by any authority whatever. The light of nature, like that of the sun, may be eclipsed: it cannot be extinguished.

NOTWITHSTANDING all the abuses of private and public morality, therefore, that the passions of some men may commit occasionally, and that the particular interest of others may invite them to propagate, even under the mask of religion, these two internal proofs of the divine institution of the law of nature, the conscious certainty that we have, and the plainness and simplicity of it, are in their full force, and superior to those of the same kind which any other revelation contains. It may seem strange to many that the plainness and simplicity of the law of nature should be brought as a proof of its divinity. They have been accustomed to think that types, symbols, figures, dark enigmatical expressions, and every thing that has the appearance of mystery, are essential marks of a divine revelation. Such might a revelation made to superior Beings appear to us; and such would a revelation made to us concerning the divine nature, and the secret economy of the divine providence, not only appear to be, but really be, mysterious and unintelligible, and therefore no revelation at all. For this very reason, it is agreeable to all our ideas of wisdom to believe that no such revelation was intended to be made to us. Such means could not be proportionable to any end. The all-wise Creator could not mean to inform his creatures unintelligibly, or to leave an explanation of his nature, and of the whole economy of his providence, to be made by men who undertake both presumptuously, and who dishon-

nor both, as far as man may be said to honor or dishonor God, by all the silly paradoxes they advance dogmatically, and without having, for the most part, any just notions even of the wisdom and dignity of human conduct in superior forms of life. Such mysterious means then could not have been effectual, unless our improvement in metaphysical knowledge had been the end of divine wisdom, which it would be impertinent to suppose: and if the end of this wisdom was to inform us of the divine will, to shew us the perfection of our nature, and to teach us to tend towards it in the pursuit of happiness, such means are quite unnecessary. They are, therefore, proportioned to no end. They are, therefore, unworthy of God.

CLEARNESS, precision, and a true conformity to the nature of things are the perfections of human, and much more of divine laws. Though the nature of the universe, and the rules by which God proceeds in the government of every system contained in it, of ours among the rest, are unknown to us, yet is the nature of our own system, as far as the morality of actions is concerned, sufficiently known to us, and the laws of our nature consequently, since they result from it. Here then is all the clearness, all the precision, and all the conformity to the nature of things, that God can give, or man desire. From hence we may, and we ought, to form our judgment of all laws that are assumed to be divine. They must not be incom-

incomprehensible; because, though they proceed from the divine intelligence, they are adapted to the human. God does not shew his own nature in them. He shews us our nature, and our duty; by the first of which we stand in the lowest relation of intellectual creatures to their Creator, and by the last in that of subjects and servants to a gracious and beneficent lord and master, who gives us laws neither ambiguous nor captious, and who commands us nothing which it is not our interest to perform.

ANOTHER internal proof of the divinity of natural law must not be passed over without mention. As all is simple and plain, nothing is mean nor trifling in it. This religion shews us a Supreme Being, veiled in the majesty of his nature, but manifested in all his works to be the true and only true object of our adoration. In the existence he has given us, and in the benefits that attach us so strongly to it, this religion shews him to be the first and greatest object of our gratitude; in the established order of things, subject to so many vicissitudes and yet so constant, to be the reasonable, as well as necessary object of our resignation; and finally in the wants, distresses, and dangers, which these vicissitudes bring frequently upon us, to be the comfortable object of our hope: in which hope, the religion of nature will teach us, no doubt, to address ourselves to the Almighty, in a manner consistent with an entire resignation to his will, as some of the heathen did. But this religion

religion will not teach us to pray, as if we informed omniscience, or expostulated with omnipotence, as those who pretend to be the most reformed among christians are accustomed to do ; nor to make religion a service of shew and outward gesture, as your pretended catholic church has done. The religion of nature teaches to worship God in spirit and in truth, that is inwardly and sincerely. It neither confounds spiritual pride and enthusiasm, nor theatrical pomp and superstitious rites, with devotion. Fraud, envy, malice, silent and secret vices, more dangerous often to society than those of greater eclat, have lurked behind the former. The latter, though they affect the senses without touching the heart, have passed in general, and still pass, for divine worship. God has been served in a manner, which the most sanguinary tyrant would abhor, by some people : by others, with all the circumstances of that low adulation which earthly monarchs require, and whereof the priests themselves have claimed a share. That there is a middle proceeding, fit to be observed, between a theatrical worship and a worship stripped of all outward solemnity and pomp, I am ready to admit. In this, and in a multitude of cases, the law of nature or right reason may approve such laws and institutions as nature or reason has not prescribed ; because they may be proper, and even necessary means to promote the observation of this law. But then they ought to pass for forms directed to this purpose, for human not for divine ordinances. Let the priest wear a ridiculous cap and breast-plate,

plate, or fringes and bells on his robe ; but let it not be said that the Supreme Being took care of his attire, or that such trifles as these were the institutions of divine wisdom.

THERE is nothing in the law of nature unworthy the author of it ; and much less can it, or does it contain any thing inconsistent with itself. The rules by which God governs even the system to which we belong are unknown to us ; but this we know most certainly, that he cannot command in particular, what he forbids in general. He who has made benevolence to all rational beings the fundamental law of our nature, can never command some to rob, or to murder others ; to usurp on the rights of their fellow-creatures, and to exterminate whole nations. In short, the internal proofs of the divinity of the law of nature, both positive and negative, are such as render this law the true criterion of every law and religion that pretend to the same original. It may be disputed, perhaps, whether our abstract notions of the moral fitness and unfitness of things afford a sufficient rule, whereby to judge of the truth of any religion that is said to come from God. But there is no room to dispute, whether the conformity or non-conformity of such a religion to that law which God has given to all human creatures, enacted in the constitution of their nature, and discernible by the use of those faculties he has given them likewise, is a rule sufficient for this purpose. Was it otherwise, we should have no sufficient rule at all.

Men

Men might dispute eternally about the dictates of right reason, and the will of God would be entirely out of the question; or it would be made determinable by an indeterminable question, what those eternal fitnesses and unfitnesses of things are, according to which, and in a dependency on which, the will of God must proceed, and be signified to his creatures. That this would be so, is evident in the different opinions that have been entertained, ever since theology was made a science, concerning the existence of evil as well as good, and concerning the distribution of them. But if we confine ourselves to the revelation God has made of his will in his works, and to the knowledge we have that his will is necessarily determined by his wisdom, we shall have a certain and sufficient rule by which to judge of his laws. What is the will of God, is a question easily answered. What ought this will to be, is a question we cannot presume to answer without absurdity and impiety both. To answer the first, we need to go no higher than the moral obligations that arise in our own system, and of which we have very adequate ideas. To answer the last, we must go up to the nature of the author of nature, and to a multitude of other natures, the assuming of which put the Supreme Being just in the case of his creature man. The nature of the human system is independent on man; and yet he is obliged to derive the rules of his conduct from it. Just so, upon this assumption, the abstract natures and eternal essences of things are independent on God; and yet God was obliged

to make, and is obliged to govern his system according to them.

By employing our reason to collect the will of God from the fund of our nature, physical and moral, and by contemplating seriously and frequently the laws that are plainly, and even necessarily, deducibly from thence, we may acquire not only a particular knowledge of these laws, but a general, and in some sort an habitual, knowledge of the manner in which God is pleased to exercise his supreme power in this system, beyond which we have no concern. We do not see the divine painter, if I may employ so low a comparison on so high a subject; but we grow accustomed to his manner, and we learn to despise those who present us a sign-post dawbing, and call it impudently the work of RAPHAEL.

IX.

AS certain, as plain, as important, and as consistent as the law of nature is, it has been blended with many absurd and contradictory laws, in all ages and countries, by legislators who published them, sometimes in their own name, and sometimes in the name of God; as well as with customs of the same kinds, which, if they arose independent on laws, obtained the force of laws. EUSEBIUS, in the first book of his Evangelical preparation, gives a long catalogue of them; and he gives it for a very good purpose, to shew in several instances how such laws and customs as these

these had been reformed by the gospel, that is, by a law which renewed and confirmed and enforced the original law of nature. *SEXTUS EMPIRICUS*, an antient, and *MONTAIGNE*, a modern sceptic, collected numerous examples of the same sort, but to a very bad purpose; to shew, if they had been able, that there is no such thing as a fixed immutable law of nature, which obliges all men at all times alike. They sought it where it is not to be found; and, not finding it there, concluded it was to be found no where. This doctrine has been promoted by Pyrrhonians, Sceptics, and Academicians, between whom it is neither obvious nor worth our while to distinguish, as well as by dogmatical atheists; for they who doubted of God's existence, or who denied it, could not fail to doubt of, or to deny, the existence of his law. Of all these, it will be sufficient to mention the admired *CARNEADES*, the sum of whose disputation upon this subject *LACTANTIUS* has preserved; and although it be one of those trite common-place citations which abound in learned writings, yet it deserves a particular mention; because it expresses, in very few words, the full absurdity of those who deny a natural law, and points out the two principal blunders on which their whole reasoning proceeds.

CARNEADES then affirmed *, " that laws were " made by men, for their utility; that they were

* *Jura sibi homines pro utilitate sanxisse, scilicet varia pro moribus, et apud eosdem pro temporibus saepe mutata; jus autem naturale nullum esse. Omnes et homines, et alias animalibus, manentes,*

“ therefore various, as the characters of those
 “ who made them; and changeable among the
 “ same men according to the various circum-
 “ stances of time: but that there was no law of
 “ nature. That all men, and all animals, were
 “ carried to their several kinds of utility by na-
 “ ture: so that there could be no justice; or, if
 “ there was any such thing, it must be extremely
 “ foolish; because, in providing for the good of
 “ others, the just would hurt themselves.” That
 laws were made for utility, both those which we
 call civil, and those which we call the laws of na-
 tions, that they are various as the characters of
 men, and changeable as the circumstances of time,
 no one will deny. But will it follow that there
 is no such thing as a natural law, such as the
 wisest philosophers, and even the antient poets
 have acknowledged, although a little confusedly,
 according to their custom, yet in plain and direct
 opposition to this doctrine? a law, neither invented
 by men, nor enacted by human authority, “ neque
 “ hominum ingenii excogitatem, neque scitum
 “ aliquod populorum?” a law not co-eval with the
 divine mind, as TULLY* would have it, when
 he says “ orta autem est simul cum mente divina;”
 but such a law, as he describes in the words that
 stand immediately before these, a law proceeding
 from the nature of things, “ ratio profecta a re-
 “ rum natura;” a law which did not begin when
 mantes, ad utilitates suas, natura ducente, ferri: proinde,
 aut nullam esse justitiam, aut, si sit aliqua, summam esse ful-
 titiam; quoniam sibi nocaret alienis commodis consulens.

* TULLY De leg. l. i.

it was first reduced into writing, “ quae non tum “ denique incipit lex esse cum scripta est,” but when it first existed, “ sed tum cum orta est;” and it existed first when that system of nature, from which it results, “ unde profecta est,” began to exist? The first part therefore of this academical declamation proved nothing against natural law; and CARNEADES might as well have affirmed that the Athenians had no laws before SOLON, because SOLON gave them some; or that rapes were lawful at Rome before SEXTUS TARQUINIUS ravished LUCRETIA, because there was no written law before that time which forbid them. The second part contains two blunders, that run into one another. It is a blunder surely to assume that men, and all other animals, are carried indiscriminately by nature to their end, utility, without distinguishing between natural instinct common to both, and superior reason peculiar to man. It is a blunder surely to assume, in consequence, that, since utility is their object, justice is a folly. Men may have pleasure, to which instinct hurries them, but they cannot have happiness, to which reason leads them, without justice, according to what has been already laid down: and it is wisdom therefore, not folly, to forego the first in some instances, in every instance where the least incompatibility is found between them, that we may secure the last. The good of individuals is so closely connected with the good of society, that the means of promoting one cannot be separated from those of promoting the other; and SOCRATES was in the right to curse

the men, who first divided, in opinion, things that cohered, in nature, morality and utility ; “ qui primum haec natura cohaerentia opinione “ distraxissent *.” I might have quoted the latter part of what LACTANTIUS makes CARNEADES say, and which is said to shew the great hurt that justice would do, in order to shew more truly the great hurt that injustice does. If the Romans, and all those who were possessed of empire, had been obliged to restore to every people the unjust usurpations they had made upon them, these conquerors would have been obliged to return to their huts and to their antient penury, “ ad casas esse “ redeundum, et in egestate et miseriis jacendum.” But it is almost too trifling to deserve mention ; since, transferred from the law of nations to the laws of particular societies, it objects to justice the great mischief of obliging a robber to restore to the owner what he has stolen from him, and denies that restitution is just, although reparation of injuries is plainly essential to justice.

If we had all the volumes that have been written concering the laws, institutions, customs, and manners of the different societies of men, we should be rather perplexed than informed concerning the true system of natural law : and MONTAIGNE might challenge his readers, pretty safely, to shew him any one of these, which had the seal of universal approbation. But even this would not serve his purpose, nor afford any proof against

* TULL. De Off, 1, iii;

the existence of a law which human reason collects from the human system, as he vainly imagined in his zeal for pyrrhonism. The laws of nature are truly, what my lord BACON styles his aphorisms, the laws of laws. Civil laws are always imperfect, and often false deductions from them, or applications of them; nay they stand, in many instances, in direct opposition to them. It follows from hence, not that there is no natural law, but that civil laws have been made without a sufficient and constant regard to it. Erroneous opinions of philosophers, unreasonable institutions of legislators, are often derived from true principles of nature, and may be traced up to them. The fountain from which they flowed was pure. They grew foul in their course; and no wonder they should, since the channels through which they passed were infected with human passions, human prejudices, and human ignorance. Such laws, as cannot be traced up, even under these conditions, to the original of all law, are the arbitrary dictates of mere will, imposed on some men by the force or fraud of others, and confirmed by education and custom.

Thus is the law of nature hid from our sight by all these variegated clouds of civil laws and customs, as the divine author of it is by those of superstition and artificial theology. Some gleams of true light may be seen through them. But they render it a dubious light; and it can be no better to those who have the keenest sight, till

these interpositions are removed. Then, indeed, the objects appear in their full and genuine lustre to every sight; for that which hid them both could affect neither.

X.

MANY hypotheses have been made to account for the beginning of civil society, for the nature of it, and for the motives to it. All of them have some degree of probability, and might have some share in framing those political congregations and unions, by which mankind has been divided into distinct nations, and the great commonwealth, as the Stoicians called it not improperly, into distinct states. But no one of these must pass for universal, nor be supposed to have done the work alone. In general we may say, that the foundation of civil or political societies were laid by nature, though they are the creatures of art. Societies were begun by instinct, and improved by experience. They were disturbed early, perhaps as soon as they were formed, both from within and from without, by the passions of men: and they have been maintained ever since, in opposition to them, very imperfectly, and under great vicissitudes, by human reason, which is exercised in particular systems of law for particular states, in leagues and covenants, between state and state, and in tacit agreements that constitute what is commonly called the law of nations.

THE

THE first principles of every thing, that requires human understanding and human industry to be employed about it, are rightly laid in nature; they are obvious to our search, and we are able to discover and pursue the consequences of them in speculation and in practice. But in doing this, we are left, as I may say, to ourselves. We owe the first discoveries to our own observation, and the progress we make afterwards to the strength of our own understandings, to our application and industry. We may do this well or ill; we may do too little or attempt too much, according to the use, and the right or wrong judgment, we make of our faculties; for the bona and mala ratio, that COTTA insists upon so much *, is nothing else.

IT is in great measure otherwise in the case of civil polity. In this we are not left to ourselves. We are not left to make the discovery, nor to proceed, in consequence of it, by the strength of our own understandings. We are led to it by the hand of God, as it were, and even before we have the full use of our understandings. When God made man, he made a creature, the happiness of whose being depended on his sociability with animals of his own species. He made him therefore a sociable animal, an animal capable of feeling the immediate pleasure and advantage of society.

* CIC. De nat. deor.

The necessity of natural precedes that of artificial society ; and the former, which is connected by instinct, prepares us for the latter, to which we are determined by reason. We are made capable of both in their turns. The infant cannot conceive the nature of those covenants that constitute civil society, any more than he can propagate his species. Neither his mental, nor his corporal powers are arrived at their maturity. The ignorant man does not know them, because he has not informed himself, nor been informed by others, about them : and he who is born stupid is out of the case. I say this the rather, to expose once more the futility of that argument which has been mentioned already. To prove that the child, whilst he is a child, and the ignorant man, whilst he is ignorant, can neither institute civil society, nor comprehend the nature of it, serves to no other purpose, than to compose to slumber a reader of common sagacity, who perceives at one glance the different senses, though equally true, in which men are reckoned qualified for civil society, and fishes to swim, or birds to fly, or oaks to bear acorns *.

You poets have given beautiful descriptions of a golden age, with which you suppose that the world began. Some venerable fathers of the church have given much the same descriptions of another golden age, with which they suppose that

* Vide PUFFEN. Lib. vii, c. 1,

it is to end, and which will make some amends for the short duration of the paradisaical state, since the latter is to continue a thousand years. Now, though I do not believe that men were as good, any more than I believe that other animals were as tame, by nature, as you represent them to have been in the primeval world; yet I do not believe neither that such a state, as HOBBS assumed, ever did, or could exist, nor that men ever were in a state of absolute individuality at any time before the institution of civil society. How they came into the world, reason will tell us no better than history or tradition does. To suppose that the first of human kind were quickened into life by the sun, and were animated systems of mud, as the Egyptians did, I think, according to DIODORUS SICULUS, would be too absurd; neither could we conceive, if the hypothesis was admitted, how these human insects were able to provide for their wants, and to rear themselves up to manhood, whatever we assumed the physical constitution of the world to have been at that time. If we are persuaded then that this world, and the inhabitants of it had a beginning in time, we must of necessity assume that the first men and the first women, or that one man and one woman at least, were produced in full strength and vigor of body and mind, prompted by instinct to an act of which they might not foresee the consequence, and prompted by self-love, when they saw it, to love themselves in their children, and to nurse and educate their off-spring.

Thus

Thus natural societies and paternal governments began. I shall not inquire how far the latter is founded in that blind act of generation, whose motive and end is the mutual pleasure of man and woman alone. Much less shall I mispend any time in comparing the opinion of GROTIUS*, which is favorable to paternal, with that of HOBSES, which is so to maternal authority†. This only I will observe, by the way, that if HOBSES advanced a paradox, it was such an one as he might have maintained with advantage against GROTIUS, and even with more against FILMER, who left the word "mother" out of his quotation of the fifth commandment. GROTIUS did not presume thus far, but he gives the preference to paternal authority, in the case of any dispute between the two, on account of the pre-eminence of the sex, "ob sexus praestantiam." Another writer would have urged that, if the right of parents over children was acquired by generation, as GROTIUS || affirmed, the right of the mother ought to be preferred, in case of any dispute, since her right by generation can never be doubtful; the father's may. She is always a real mother: he may be often a reputed father, and the argument "ob sexus praestantiam" is, in this particular instance, more applicable to the woman. But, however this may be, the pa-

* Lib. ii. c. 5. † De cive, c. 9.

|| Generatione jus acquiritur parentibus in liberos.

ternal authority, arising from education, is clear: and that instinct, which determines parents to take care of their children, gives them, by the law of nature, all that authority over them*, without which they could not take this care. This authority is and must be absolute whilst their children are unable to judge for, and to direct themselves. It becomes limited when their children are able to do this without their help, and yet continue to live in the same family. It ceases when their children go out of their family, and acquire independency, or even paternal dominion of their own.

THUS far the law of nature is plain: and this is sufficient to shew how we are led by the hand of God, that is, by the circumstances in which he has ordained that we should be born; by the necessary dependance of children, by the instinct of parents, by information, by habit, and finally by reason; how we are led, I say, to civil through natural society, and are fitted to be members of one, by having been members of the other. This is the case of every one in particular, and has been that of mankind collectively considered.

ALL the inhabitants of some other planet may have been, perhaps, from their creation united in one great society, speaking the same language, and living under the same government; or too

* GROTIUS, ib.

perfect

perfect by their nature to need the restraint of any. But mankind is constituted very differently: and although the natural law of our whole species be the same, yet we are by nature incapable, on many accounts, of uniting under one form of government, or of submitting to one rule of life. Our nearest approaches to this state are vastly distant from it; and even these were made by slow degrees, and with great variety of imperfection; although nature herself, by directing the first, made all the rest the more easy, as she made them the more necessary. Men were never out of society; for if they were divided into families before they were assembled into nations, they were in society still from their original: and the want of comprehending that which is natural, and that which is artificial, properly distinguished, under the same general term, has produced much confusion in reasoning on this subject, and has served to maintain many a false argument. BAYLE*, for instance, denies that the peace, the happiness, and even the preservation of mankind, depend on society. How does he support his paradox? As ill at least, as he supports the inutility of religion to government. He cites SALLUST to prove that the Aborigines in Italy, and the Getulians and the Lybians in Africa, had neither laws, nor magistrates, nor forms of government. He cites POMPONIUS MELA, and he might have cited many other authorities antient and modern, to much the same purpose; for authors, by repeat-

* Con. des Pens. diver. 118.

ing one another, propagate the same mistakes very often, and increase the number of witnesses, without strengthening the testimony ; which may have happened on these occasions for aught he knew. But this he knew, this he should have observed, and this he would have observed if the observation had made for him in this place, for he makes it in all those where it does make for him, how much authors are apt to exaggerate in their descriptions, and the characters they draw. How barbarous were those nations, who broke the Roman empire, represented to be, the Goths for example, or the Lombards ? and yet when they came to settle in Italy, and to be better known, how much less barbarous did they appear, even than the Greeks and the Romans ? What prudence in their government ? what wisdom in their laws ? But I touch this without insisting on it. Let it be that the Aborigines, the Getulians, the Lybians, and the inhabitants of the inward parts of Africa, had neither written laws, nor civil magistrates, will it follow that they had no customs which were among them equivalent to laws, no fathers nor elders that supplied the place of civil magistrates, no forms of government because they had not those of civil government ? Will it follow, in short, that they lived without society, because they lived without political society ? The very passage cited from POMPONIUS MELA shews the contrary. They were dispersed in families indeed, and these families were governed by no law common to them all,

all, nor by any joint consultations. “ In familias
“ *passim* et sine lege dispersi, nihil in commune
“ consultant.” Just so are the Arabs of the de-
sert, many of the Tartars, and other vagabond
people at this day, not united by any national
constitution ; but so far from being without so-
ciety or government, that their several families,
or tribes, or hords, are so many societies, and
often better regulated than those that appear to be
more civilized. BAYLE, and the authors he cites,
had nothing in their minds but political societies
of human institution, and did not advert to those
that are natural. When he affirmed “ that these
“ people multiplied, and preserved themselves
“ without living in society,” and denied, on the
authority of these examples, “ that social life is
“ absolutely necessary to the preservation of the
“ human race,” he did not enough consider that
it was impossible they should multiply without
forming societies, and that he might have said
just as well that a country, over-run with inde-
pendent companies of soldiers, had none in it,
because these companies were not yet formed into
legions or regiments.

ANTIENT traditions, sacred and profane, how
imperfect and uncertain soever they are, give us
sufficient reason, by their concurrence in this
general account, to believe that mankind was at
first dispersed in families, which formed so many
distinct societies under paternal government. The
mosaical history contains the descent of one, that of

SETH,

SETH, down to the flood. There was no need of mentioning that of CAIN, which was to be wholly destroyed in this terrible catastrophe: The descent of the family of SEM, after the flood, is most carefully recorded, and those of HAM and of JAPHET are occasionally mentioned: for which difference a very good reason may be found, since the genealogy of the patriarchs, and of the people of God, was to be deduced from SEM. Our divines find a further reason: The Messiah was to proceed, above two thousand years afterwards, from a branch of the same family: and therefore the greatest care possible was taken to preserve the genealogy, as well as to perpetuate the race; of the latter of which PATRICK gives a most remarkable instance in his Commentary on Genesis. If the daughters of Lot committed incest with their father, we are not to ascribe it to unnatural lust, but to their innocence, their simplicity, and a laudable concern for the preservation of their father's family; for they believed all mankind destroyed, according to IRENAEUS; or, at least, they might believe that none were left who might go in unto them, "juxta morem universae terrae*." Our learned bishop assumes, much more ingeniously and with greater regard to virgin modesty, that these young women had the same eager desire, which then possessed the hearts of good people, to fulfil the promise of the Messiah. It was that which put them on this otherwise mon-

* Vid. lib. Gen. c. xix.

stious crime. It was that which sanctified it, in the intention, though not in the event; for the two accursed races of Moabites and Ammonites were the fruits of this incest.

XI.

I HAVE not spoken of this family to introduce the anecdote just mentioned, instructive and edifying as it is, but to shew, by an illustrious example, what the first societies of men were, and how civil societies arose out of natural, as natural societies arose out of one another. When any of these grew too numerous to inhabit the same country, or dissensions arose among them, as it happened in the case of ABRAHAM and LOT, and of ESAU and JACOB afterwards, they separated. When the father of the family preferred one of his sons to all the rest, as ABRAHAM had done, and as it was necessary that ISAAC should do in order to give JACOB the pre-eminence over ESAU, and the Israelites over the Idumeans, the families separated likewise: and new families were formed by the swarms that issued from ancient hives. The increase of families was not only great in those prolific ages, as we may observe by the numerous posterity of the two brothers ESAU and JACOB; but we may conclude, from reason and analogy both, that if families sometimes separated, they sometimes united too, for mutual conveniency; and that in this manner several little dynasties were formed, which had more settled

settled establishments than the vagabond families. How little these dynasties were, we may judge by the defeat which ABRAHAM gave, with an army of three hundred and eighteen of his servants, to the four kings who had beat the five, and pillaged Sodom and Gomorrah. There has been much learned dispute about the Egyptian dynasties: and they, who have corrupted MANETHO more, very probably, than he did the truth, have delivered them down to us in such a broken, transposed, interpolated condition, that nothing almost, which is probable, can be collected from them. Why should we not believe that his thirty dynasties were cotemporary, not successive? Why should the Egyptians not have been under the dominion of several petty kings, as well as their neighbours, when the title of king was bestowed so very liberally? On the whole, it cannot be doubted, I think, that the first societies of men were those of families formed by nature and governed by natural law, nor that kingdoms and states were the second.

NEIGHBOURHOOD, an intercourse of good offices, and, in a word, mutual conveniency, might give a beginning, by the union of independent families under compacts and covenants, to civil societies. But the principal cause of such artificial or political unions was of a very different kind. We cannot suppose that all the members of every family lived in a state of uninterrupted concord. There was a quarrel, and one brother

assassinated another, even in the family of the first man. But still in societies, as confined as these, the father's eye was over the whole community; paternal authority, not the royal fatherhood of that ridiculous writer FILMER, was always ready to interpose, and the remedy of separation was always at hand when every other failed. The state of mankind altered extremely when families had been long separated, whatever the cause of separation was; and when the natural bands were not only loosened, but lost and forgot in the course of generations; when there was no longer any regard to one common ancestor; when there was no authority to interpose between different people, and to influence and direct their conduct, as paternal authority had done where different members of the same family were alone concerned: then mutual injuries became more frequent, and their consequences more fatal.

As fast as the distribution of mankind into families, and as paternal government ceased, men went out of a natural into a political state. The former was so little what it has been represented, a state of individuality, and individuality could never be properly ascribed to creatures born in society, and members of it as soon as born. Individuality belongs to communities, not to persons. Families might be conceived as individuals, though not men, in the state of nature: and civil societies much more so in the political state. The reason is plain. We have a natural sociability, that

that is, we are determined by self-love to seek our pleasure and our utility in society, as it has been said; but when these ends are once sufficiently answered, natural sociability declines, and natural insociability commences. The influence of self-love reaches no further. Societies become in all respects individuals, that is, they have no regard to others except relatively to themselves; and self-love, that promoted union among them, promotes discord among them. Like the philosopher of Malmesbury's wild men, they act as if they had a right to all they can acquire by fraud or force: and a state of war, so far from being the cause, has been the effect of forming distinct societies, though by the general plan of nature the propagation of mankind makes it necessary to form them. Such is our inconsistency, such are the contradictions that unite in the human character,

HOBSES, and CUMBERLAND in opposition to him, have said much about the societies of ants and bees. I shall compare them with those of men no further, than the comparison is immediately apposite to my present purpose. The bees then, for it will be enough to speak of one species, and the comparison will hold best with that of which we have most experience; the bees, I say, co-operate visibly to one end, the general good of their respective communities, not by choice, nor compact, most probably, nor by authority neither, for their monarchs have no stings to punish the disobedient or the lazy; but by one in-

54 PHILOSOPHICAL WORKS.

variable and constant direction, that of instinct. If reason could supply the place of instinct, be always at hand, and determine with as much force, men might be as good citizens as bees. But the rational creatures neglect their reason, or degrade her, in the intellectual economy, and make her the vile instrument of their appetites and passions. This is so much the case, that men would have been what HOBSES assumes that they were, if the divine wisdom had not constituted them so, that they are, as soon as they come into the world, members of societies which are formed by instinct and improved by reason. What reason cannot do by herself, she does in some degree by the adventitious helps which experience enables her to acquire, by orders and rules of government, which every man concurs to maintain because every man is willing to controll the passions and restrain the excesses of others, whatever indulgence he has for his own. I said, in some degree: for, even with these adventitious helps, reason preserves human societies unequally, and by a perpetual conflict: whereas instinct preserves those of bees in one uniform tenor, and without any conflict at all. The passions rebel against reason: but instinct is reason and passion both.

THUS bees live with bees in their several hives, and have much advantage over men in domestic life. But their sociability goes no further. Whenever any of these families, for so much they may be compared, transmigrate or send out colonies

to seek new habitations, cruel wars ensue, if you will take the word of VIRGIL, as good a naturalist at least as HOMER, for it. I have read somewhere that ORIGEN thought God had thus determined them, to set an example of making war to men. I had rather believe the father misunderstood or belied; and assume that the same instinct governs these animals no longer when they forsake their hives; so that their own ferocity, or that of their kings, carries them to all the excesses of infiociality. Every king is a JOSHUA, or an ATTILA, and under his command

corpora bello
Objectant, pulchramq; petunt per vulnera mortem.

As long as he lives there is no composition, no peace; no truce to be had: they fight usque ad interacionem. As soon as he falls, they plunder their common hive, and the family or little state is dissolved.

Rege incolumi, mens omnibus una est.
Amisso, rupere fidem, constructaque mella
Diripuere ipsae, et crates solvere favorum.

It is not quite the same in the case of mankind. Their families or hordes, and the colonies they send out, unite sometimes for mutual utility with others, as I have hinted. Reason, which had co-operated with instinct before, takes the place of it now. They coalite amicably by covenants, they make laws by common consent, and

from being members of a natural, they become such of a political society. It seems, however, that these political societies have been more frequently formed by compositions after wars, by a forced submission to the law of conquerors, and by associations made to prevent conquest. We easily conceive that the insociability of families made the strongest invade the weakest, and the weakest unite against the strongest. When larger communities were thus formed, the same insociability, and therefore the same policy, continued; so that fear may be said to have been a principal inducement in this manner to mankind, not to form societies, as it has been understood, but to submit to civil government.

COMMUNITIES, formed by the union of different families, were not only more numerous than any particular families, but they were composed of heterogeneous parts, of members unconnected by consanguinity, or the habit of living together, and connected only by accidental circumstances, and the tye of covenants. These circumstances, or the dispositions they had produced, might alter; and the tye of covenants, without a supreme power to enforce the observation of them, could not hold. Paternal authority, therefore, which had been sufficient to maintain, in some degree, peace and good order in societies composed of a few, and those few members of the same family, as well as of the same society, might be insufficient, on both these accounts, to maintain

tain the same degree of peace and good order in communities more numerous, and incorporated rather by art or by force, than by nature. Thus it became necessary to establish a power superior to that of the fathers of families, and, as fast as men went out of the state of nature, to substitute artificial to natural government. This was not done all at once, I suppose, nor every where in the same manner. But it seems most probable that these governments were in general monarchical. I know that some writers have thought otherwise; but they have no more right to affirm than I have, who am far from affirming. We must all guess, and probabilities must be weighed. It has been said, " that when men, who were in " a state of natural freedom and natural equality, " resolved by common consent to submit them- " selves to civil government, they chose the de- " mocratical form, in order to keep this govern- " ment in their own hands ; and that the fathers " of families, who had been used to indepen- " dency, must have concurred in the same " choice *." Now the very reverse of this seems more probable to me. The fathers of families, who could not all be kings upon this change, would have preferred aristocracy to democracy ; and the multitude would have preferred monarchy to both. The former would have been desirous to retain some image of their ancient authority, and the latter would have滑ed into a form of

* Puff. L. vii. c. 5.

government that resembled the paternal, to which they had been accustomed, much more easily than they would have constituted one entirely new, and the nature of which, for want of experience, would not have been very obvious to their apprehension. This easy transition, from paternal government to monarchical, seems to have been very well understood by LYCORGUS, who, when he was advised to establish a popular government in Sparta, bid his adviser try in the first place to establish democracy in his own family*. One may conceive equally well how monarchy changed, by the abuse of power, into aristocracy, or democracy; and how these changed, by the usurpation of power, into monarchy. But the most antient traditions, and the authority of antient writers, I think, concur in establishing this matter of fact, that monarchy, I do not say absolute monarchy or tyranny, was the first form of civil government. There are many passages to this purpose, that might be collected if it was worth my while. But there is one in the beginning of ARISTOTLE's Politics so much in point, that it must by no means be omitted. He says, " that " regal government was the first; because they, " who by their uniting formed the first states, " had been before that time under the same regi- " men in families which they afterwards conti- " nued in kingdoms."

* PLUT. in vita LYCUR.

I KNOW that the power of these kings was limited, as their kingdoms were small, in the heroical ages. But still they were kings, and not the less, but the more properly and the more truly such, ' because they were restrained from being tyrants. When JUSTIN says that in the beginning of things the government of people and nations was monarchical *, he confirms the opinion I am of. When he says that the people were bound by no laws, and that the will of princes held the place of laws †, we must not imagine that these first monarchies were governments of mere will. The tenor of tradition contradicts any such proposition. I might quote the authority of THUCYDIDES, and others, against it ; but I chuse to quote that of JUSTIN himself against it, who says, in the same place, that it was not ambition, but a moderation tried and approved by all good men, that raised up princes to this dignity ||. Thus the Medes, weary of that anarchy into which their families were fallen, chose DEJOCES, a man famous for wisdom, integrity, and justice, to be their king. It was not by virtue of their regal prerogative that these first kings gave laws, written or unwritten, permanent or occasional ; for it is probable that in those antient days there were few or no written

* *Principio rerum, gentium nationumque imperium penes reges erat.*

† *Populus nullis legibus tenebatur, arbitria principum pro legibus erant.* JUST. l. i. c. 1.

|| *Quos ad fastigium hujus majestatis non ambitio popularis, sed spectata inter bonos moderatio, provehebat.* ib.

bodies of law: and you can tell better, than I can, whether HOMER once mentions the word in his poems. But however this might be, the first kings had neither arbitrary nor legislative power by virtue of any regal prerogative: on the contrary, they were chosen kings because they were chosen legislators, and the goodness of their laws recommended them to the throne, and maintained them in it. The power of making laws was so far from being originally, and exclusively, annexed to monarchy, though it sometimes made monarchs, that DRACO, who never was one, imposed his laws, which were said to be writ in blood because of their extreme severity, on the Athenians; that SOLON, who never would be one, repealed these laws, and established others; and that PISISTRATUS, who made himself one, far from repealing those of SOLON, governed by them. The first kings were limited monarchs. They earned the sovereignty by great and good actions, held it from their people, and were accountable to their people for the exercise of it: such I mean as came to their crowns by consent, and in countries where common utility united families in civil society, and neither conquest nor the fear of it.

XII.

THE attempts which so many learned and ingenious men have made, with infinite labor of study, to fix points of chronology and history concerning ancient nations, that of the Egyptians particularly,

ticularly, have seemed to me, ever since I knew what they are, extremely ridiculous. They have seemed so the more, because some general and useful truths may be collected, without any trouble, from the broken and fabulous materials they employ with so much trouble, and to so little useful purpose. The original of the Egyptians and the order of their dynasties will never be known. The most antient traditions, sacred and profane, supposing them all authentic, would be still insufficient for this end. But they are sufficient for another. They shew us the nature of government, and the character of mankind, in those early ages. They shew us the first kings, and the primitive government of Egypt, such as I have described ; and such they continued to be as long as their gods reigned, that is, as long as their kings pursued the true ends of their institution, and made their glory consist in the good government of their own people, not in the conquest of others *. OSIRIS and ISIS civilised their manners, and taught them to sow corn and to plant the vine. The first MERCURY taught them the use of letters, instructed them in the sciences, and in arts, in that of physic especially, both for the body and the mind ; and was, besides, their first or greatest legislator. Other MERCURIES succeeded THOT. COTTA makes them five in all †. These explained the hieroglyphics of the first, improved on what he had taught

* Fines imperii tueri magis, quam proferre, mos erat. Intra suam cuique patriam regna finiebantur. JUST. ubi supra.

† Apud CICER. De nat. deor.

in six and thirty thousand volumes or rolls, as some legends affirm, and completed that wisdom of the Egyptians wherein MOSES was instructed; for no man, except a Jew, will believe that the daughter of PHARAOH sent into Greece to procure preceptors for her foundling.

THE Egyptians were little known to the Greeks, from whom all our knowledge of them is derived, till the reign of PSAMMETICHUS, much more than a thousand years after the dynasties of their gods, and their golden age, as we may call it; and yet even then the first principles of good policy and of a limited monarchy subsisted. They pierced through various revolutions of government, and maintained themselves in reverence during an immense number of years. The same thing has happened, and by the same means, among the Chinese, whom I might have quoted for the same purpose as I quote the former; since their empire began as early, has lasted near three thousand years longer, and resembles that of Egypt in many respects; in these particularly, in a great reverence for antiquity, in a strong attachment to those primitive institutions by which the order of their government has been preserved, and their monarchs, how absolute soever they may appear, have been restrained in the exercise of their power.

Now these governments, like all others which men have instituted, and to which they have submitted by consent, though they are artificial, are however

however instituted by virtue of the law of our nature, and are, in this sense, of divine appointment. That sovereignty, or supremacy, for such it may be called in a true sense, which was at first in fathers of families, not for their sakes, but for the sake of their offspring, and the propagation of the human species, belongs to one sovereign or supreme magistrate; to more than one, to the collective or representative body of the people; and sometimes to all these, according to the various constitutions of civil governments, which were indifferent before they were made, but cease to be so, and are obligatory on every member of the community, afterwards. There must be an absolute power in every civil society placed somewhere. As it is placed in one man, or in more, a monarchy arises, or an aristocracy, or a democracy: and when it is divided between all these, a mixed government, which is, I presume, the best of the four. By this representation, so evidently true that no man who is in his wits can doubt of it, we may learn to despise and abhor certain venal or stupid writers in favour of monarchy. Some of these would persuade, like FILMER, that ADAM was an absolute monarch by creation; that his right has descended to kings; that all other men are slaves by birth, and never had a right to chuse either forms of government or governors. Some again would persuade, like HORNIUS, whom PUFFENDORF * cites and refutes, that altho' men have a right to make covenants and constitute civil

* Lib. vii. c. 3.

governments,

governments, they have no power to confer ~~for~~ sovereignty on princes. They may chuse a king to govern them, that is, they may name a person on whom this sovereignty, this majesty, this power to govern, which they cannot give, will descend, by a sort of divine emanation, from God, who can alone give them. FILMER's hypothesis will be always lame, as well as absurd, till ADAM's right heirs, for all other princes are by this hypothesis no better than usurpers, can be certainly distinguished. They would be so by HARRY MARTIN's expedient, if they were born with combs on their heads, and every other man with a bunch on his back. But nothing of this kind has yet appeared among the phaenomena of nature; and till it does we must content ourselves to acknowledge such kings as we have. The hypothesis of HORNIUS does not expose us to the same uncertainty; and we may know our king by much the same rule by which the Tartarians know their god. When a king is chosen, sovereignty and majesty descend immediately upon him, and he is completely a king. When a great lama is chosen, the soul of Foe enters immediately into him, and he is completely a god. There are many more foolish and knavish hypotheses of the same kind; and the principal promoters of them, in every country, have been the clergy, whose flattery to princes had well nigh succeeded among us, so as to make the cause of tyranny what it has been, and still continues to be made in other nations, the cause of God. But tho' we believe that monarchy was

was the first form of civil government, and that paternal government might lead men to it; yet may we believe very consistently, and we must believe unless we resolve to believe against fact and reason both, that this, like every other form of government, is of human institution, established by the people, and for the people; and that no other majesty, since the word imposes so much, is inherent in it than that which belongs to the supreme power of every state, wherever that power is placed. Natural government was designed to last, and did last, till civil government became necessary. Nature instituted one, and directed human reason to the other. She meant the same in both cases, the good of the governed. Her institution and her direction could not have different ends. She intended, no doubt, that they, who had been treated like children under the influence of instinct, should be treated so likewise under the influence of reason.

XIII.

I HAVE said thus much, in order to shew that political societies grew out of natural, and that civil governments were formed not by the concurrence of individuals, but by the associations of families. It is the more necessary to repeat and to inculcate this distinction, because, for want of making it, and by representing mankind to themselves, like a number of savage individuals out of all society in their natural state, instead of consider-

ing them as members of families from their birth; and such too long to be at any time the solitary vagabonds of the other hypothesis, our best writers, even Mr. HOOKER, and much more Mr. LOCKE, have reasoned both inconsistently, and on a false foundation. Inconsistently, because they sometimes acknowledge paternal government to have preceded civil, and yet reason about the institution of civil, as if men had been then first assembled in any kind of society, or had been subject to any kind of rule: for to say that the law of nature was of itself such a rule, and that every one of these independent inhabitants of the earth did, or might exercise justice for himself and others, on those who violated this law, was language unworthy of Mr. LOCKE, and unnecessary to his system; and yet it is the language of his second chapter in his second book of Civil Government. Fairly, because it is easy to demonstrate that mankind never was in such a state of nature as these authors generally, the best and the worst, have assumed, by demonstrating that the generations of men could not have been continued in such a state. It is impossible we should know, by history or tradition, how the first civil governments were established. It is so impossible, that if any history or tradition pretended to give such relations, they would lose deservedly all credit for this very reason. But we may guess with great probability, by analogy from what we know; and we may reject without presumption the whimsies, that speculative men invent in contradiction to this analogy, and to the visible

visible constitution of human nature. " If we may not suppose men ever to have been in the state of nature," says Mr. LOCKE*, " because we hear not much of them in such a state, we may as well suppose the armies of SALMANASSER or XERXES were never children, because we hear little of them till they were men, and embodied in armies." But, with submission to this great author, the comparison is not at all to his purpose, nor helps him in the least to answer the objection he supposed might be made to him. No man would be mad enough, most certainly, to deny that all these soldiers had been once children, though he neither knew them nor had ever heard of them in their childhood. But, to make the comparison apposite, no man should be able to affirm that all these soldiers had been members of other communities before they were embodied in these armies. The question is not, whether men lived together in the state of nature since the world was their common habitation, but, what the state of nature was, whether it was composed of men who lived together in families, and whether these families, by uniting together, gave a beginning to political societies; or whether it was composed of as many solitary individuals as there were men in the world, and whether these men, independent and equal one amongst another, met amicably together, and set up government without any better preparation for it:

LOCKE insists much on the natural equality and

* Civ. Gov. c. viii.

freedom of mankind; but he seems to carry his notions on the subject a little further than nature, and the reason of things, will allow. We may distinguish a personal and a social equality. Nature has been far from constituting the first, and the creatures of no other species are probably so unequal in this respect as those of the human. The utmost efforts of art cannot give them even the appearances of equality. But nature has really, if not so apparently, constituted the last; for the father was a son, and the son will be a father; the magistrate might have been a subject, and the subject a magistrate. Nature has determined nothing in these cases, and therefore these last destinations, when they are made with a partial inequality in these societies of men, are due solely to the folly of men, to their neglect of natural indications, not to the indications of nature, and to the imperfection of all human establishments; so that the reverse of them would take effect, for the most part, if the indications of nature were observed and followed. He who sits on a throne would inhabit a cottage, and he who holds a plough would wield a scepter.

THAT all men are born to be free, is undoubtedly true; and therefore I think that they never were in such a state of nature as LOCKE assumes. His state of perfect freedom, so he calls it *, would have been a state of war and violence, of mutual and alternate oppression, as really as that which

* Ib. c. ii.

HOBBS imagined to have been the state of nature. He distinguishes, indeed, between liberty and licence, and supposes a law of nature in force to restrain the latter. But as he supposes, at the same time, that every man had an equal right to be the executioner of this law, as well as the judge, and to punish the offenders against it, not only for his own preservation, but in order to preserve mankind in general, it is plain that this hypothesis implies the same absurdities as the other, and that the state of mankind under the law of nature, according to LOCKE, would have been very little, if at all, better than the state of nature before there was any such thing as law, according to HOBBS. The pretence of law in one, would have done as much hurt as the want of it in the other ; and it is easy to conceive what tyranny and oppression would have prevailed universally, if every man, besides being judge in his own cause, had been an universal judge and executioner.

MR. LOCKE doubted not but his doctrine would seem very strange to some men ; and, in truth, they must be very strange men to whom it does not appear such. He asks, however, before it be condemned, to have this question resolved, by what right princes or states can put to death or punish an alien for any crime he commits in their countries ? The alien is not subject to their laws. They must punish him, therefore, by the law of nature ; and, if by the law of nature every man hath not power to punish offences against it, he does not see how the magistrates of any commu-

nity can punish an alien. This is the question, this the argument; and a sufficient answer may be given to both, without consulting GROTIUS, PUFFENDORF, or any of the oracles of law. Though an alien does not owe allegiance to the sovereign power of the country wherein he is an alien, because two distinct allegiances cannot be due from the same person at the same time; yet he is under the protection of that government, and a subject of it who should rob or murder him would be punished by the laws of it. He is therefore liable to be punished by the same laws: and it is not true that they who make them and they who execute them are to him, in such cases as these, men without authority. The laws that concern men as denizens only, concern him not, for he enjoys none of the advantages peculiarly and exclusively attributed to denizens. But the laws that are necessary to preserve the peace and good order of a community concern every man who lives in it, and the alien submits himself voluntarily to them when he resolves to do so. He can be entitled to protection on no other condition. He accepts this condition: he is punishable therefore by his own consent; and the municipal laws, not the laws of nature alone, condemn him justly. But if the former did not speak to him, if he was not bound to hearken to them, as LOCKE affirms too generally and too rashly, would there be no difference between the right which he assumes to belong to every man by nature of punishing offences against her laws, as this man soberly judges the case to require, and that right which a court of justice has to proceed

by

by stated rules, that reason authorises, and general content approves, against an alien who violates at once the particular laws of a community and the universal laws of nature? Would there be so little difference that one could not stand without the other, nor the conduct of princes and states in punishing aliens in these cases be justified, unless this strange doctrine were admitted? I think no man who is capable of reflection will be of this mind. But thus it happens to men of the greatest genius, when they grow to be over fond of an hypothesis. They pursue the trains of their abstract, that is their general ideas, wherever these carry them. Thus they are led to maintain propositions so little conformable to the real constitution of things, that he who reasons less on general notions, and confines himself more to observe this constitution in every particular, will have frequent occasions to discern a wide difference between the speculations of philosophers and the original invariable system of nature.

I AM not as much persuaded as Mr. LOCKE was, that all political societies began from a voluntary union. Many of them did, and I think that this union was a voluntary union of families in societies that may be called legal, because they were made according to natural and divine appointment; for those, that may be called illegal, will fall under another consideration. I think thus because the most early traditions, and the most antient as well as modern histories, even those that

are cited to proved the contrary, shew me mankind not only in their childhood, but in their manhood, assembled in families before they were so in civil societies. JOSEPH ACOSTA, who is cited by LOCKE, says "there was reason to conjecture, " that the people of Peru had neither kings nor " commonwealths for a long time." But how did they live during this time? Were they so many individuals scattered about the country without any form or appearance of society? By no means. They lived in troops as they do at this day in Florida: and we know how the people of Florida and North-America live at this day, by a multitude of persons, missionaries and others, who all represent them as tribes or families, that observe the precepts and customs of their ancestors, that have public assemblies for consultation wherein their elders preside, and that give the supreme command, over them, in time of war at least, to persons they elect, as other savages submit to the more permanent authority of their caciques. I think it evident beyond all contradiction, from observing the constitution of human nature, physical, and moral, that mankind could not have subsisted, nor have been propagated, if men had been ever out of society, and that having been educated till their years of discretion in it, though they might possibly but rarely change societies, they would never go out of society, nor could become such unassociated independent creatures, as they are supposed to have been by the other hypothesis, till they became members of some political

political society. I think it easy to conceive how men were prepared, by living in natural, to live in political societies, and impossible to conceive how strolling savages, who knew no subordination, nor had been accustomed to observe any rules of social life, could be picked up one by one, as it were, and reduced at once under the laws of any civil government. Whenever this was done, paternal authority had, no doubt, a great share in determining their families to unite with one another; but if we believe that the consent of every family was collectively taken, we shall assume no more than what is actually practised among the savages on every occasion of making war and peace, of hunttings and transmigrations from one settlement to another. In short, I think as tradition, history, an analogy to what passes in some sort before our eyes, and the actual constitution of human nature lead me to think; whereas much abler men are led into different extremes, to support different hypotheses. To support the divine right and absolute power of kings, FILMER advanced the silly and slavish notion of royal fatherhood. Silly, indeed, as well as slavish it must be reputed; since though the power of the father was, on many accounts, greater and lasted longer than that of the mother, and since he could not therefore have talked of royal motherhood, if it had served his purpose, with as much seeming propriety, as of royal fatherhood; yet is it certain that even the paternal was a temporary power, as it has been explained above; and that when it

conti-

continued longer than the minority of children, this was due to gratitude, to habitual reverence, or to circumstances of conveniency, and, in no sort, to any natural right that the father had. To deduce therefore from hence a right and power, such as FILMER would ascribe to kings, is perhaps one of the greatest absurdities that was ever committed to paper. A very commendable zeal to explode these false notions of government, and to assert the cause of liberty, carried LOCKE into another extreme, very unnecessarily, as I apprehend. He assumed the state of nature to be such as could never exist, and the method of establishing civil societies to be such as could never be executed. Will it be said that he meant only to give an abstract system of the natural rights of mankind? I shall ask, if it be said, to what purpose it was to make an abstract system of rights, that never did nor could exist, and of a method of establishing civil government that never could be taken? It could serve surely no other purpose, than to give us a notion of natural liberty very different from the real constitution of nature, by which we are less able to preserve liberty without some sort or other of government, than we are liable to lose it by the abuse of government. I shall ask, in the next place, whether the right of mankind to be governed by law, and not by will, under every form of civil government, be not as well established by referring the original of all these forms to the consent of men assembled in families, as to the consent of men dispersed, God knows

knows why, after having been educated in one kind of society, and assembled, God knows how, to establish another.

XIV.

AS it is much more reasonable to judge, in all cases, by a consideration of the actual constitution of human nature, than to run the risk of mistaking what is true by imagining what may be so ; it is likewise both reasonable and necessary, on the subject spoken of here, to look as far back, as we have any light, on the natural and political state of mankind ; in which review we shall find sufficient inducements to think that the state of nature was not a state of anarchy, but a state of government, and that some form or other of it subsisted at all times and in all places, however these forms may have varied. We distinguish between natural and political society ; but the real difference between them is not so great as we imagine. Nature instituted the former, but we cannot doubt that reason and experience improved it, without changing the form, from time to time, as the circumstances of families altered. When these were altered so far that the same form would do no longer, men altered the form itself. They kept nearer to it in some societies, and went further from it in others. The institution ceased to be that of nature, it became that of art. But in all other respects there was no more reason, perhaps, to say, whenever and wherever this happened, for

it would be ridiculous to assume that it happened every where at once, that a new state of mankind arose in those places and at those times, than there has been to say so on every great revolution of government since, when monarchies have changed from elective to hereditary, when aristocracies or democracies have been raised on their ruins, or mixed governments on those of all three.

MENTION has been made of the Egyptians, who appear to have been, if any people we know of were such, the Aborigines of their country. The accounts which history gives of their political constitution, and those anecdotes which tradition has preserved concerning the original of it, incline, and almost determine, one to think that it was formed in the manner which has been assumed of forming political societies for mutual advantage, or common defence; that the union of families composed several small dynasties, and the union of dynasties one great empire; that it was so formed on principles of common utility, and without the insociable design of invading others; till SETHOSIS, or AEGYPTUS, or SESOSTRIS, and other conquerors arose, who invaded the nations of Africa, of Asia, and even of Europe, as the Ethiopians and Arabians invaded Egypt. The other great empire, the Babylonian or Affyrian, of which the Grecian antiquaries, who knew nothing of China, relate so many wonders, seems to have been formed in another manner.

LAWYERS speak of illegal communities of bodies of men who unite under certain conditions, and become societies to break all the rules of sociability ; to rob, and to plunder, like the antient Greeks spoken of by THUCYDIDES, or the modern Arabs and Tartars. Some of these have never settled in civil governments. They have gathered from time to time, like vapours into clouds, have produced storms, marked their course by devastation, and done great, but transient, mischief. Other confederacies there have been, as illegal as these in their institution, designed to invade the possessions of others, and to form political societies by conquest against the law of nature, instead of forming them by compact agreeably to it.

As I assume with more probability on my side, than such hypotheses have generally, that the reigns of the most antient kings of Egypt were called the reigns of the gods, on account of the wise laws and institutions by which they promoted the peace, and happiness of that people ; so we may assume that the Affyrian empire was founded and supported, from the first, by violence. Who NIMROD was, or BELUS, or any of those that have been named in the variety and uncertainty of traditions, among the founders of this empire, when they lived, and what they did, it is impossible to say. Even MARSHAM, who laboured this point so much, with all his sagacity, and

and all his learning, left it, as he found it, in the dark. But as NIMROD stands represented, in the mosaical history, a mighty hunter before the Lord, he gives us the idea of a warrior, and we may believe, without straining the sense of antient anecdotes too much, that BEL, BELUS, or BAAL, who was so sanguinary a god, had not been a king of great moderation, nor had acquired power by persuasion rather than by force, by the arts of peace than by usurpation and war. JUSTIN says that NINUS was the first, not to make war, but to change the nature of it*, and to extend his empire by subduing his neighbours. The Egyptian SESOSTRIS, and the Scythian TANAUS much more antient, had made war for fame alone, and, content with victory, had abstained from empire†. Their kingdoms, which each nation reputed to be the most antient of the world, and which were so perhaps of the world they knew, had been established long before these wars begun. Arts and sciences were more improved among the Egyptians: primitive simplicity among the Scythians. But it is probable, that neither of them engaged in wars, till self-defence made them necessary, or till the ambition of their princes gave occasion to them. Then SESOSTRIS harnessed monarchs to his chariot. Then the Scythians imposed a tribute on Asia rather as the trophy, than the reward, of their victory ||. The first

* Avitum gentibus morem mutavit.

† Contenti victoria, imperio abstinebant.

|| Magis in titulum imperii, quam in victoriae praemium:

Affyrian kings, on the contrary, established their monarchy by force, in an age when the illegal confederacy of a few families was sufficient to give the most forward, and the most popular man amongst them the title of a mighty hunter, and the means of forming a political society on a principle of ambition, and by usurpation on the other little states, unskilled, and unable to resist, “rudes ad resistendum.”

THERE must needs have been a multitude of numerous families, or little states, in these early days, and in the countries we speak of here, since JOSHUA conquered one and thirty kings in the land of Canaan. It is easy, therefore, to conceive how such a man as we assume NIMROD to have been, on the authority of scripture, and BELUS after him, if they were different persons, for that one was the SATURN and the other the JUPITER of the Greeks is not so very certain; that such a man, I say, might unite by consent both men and families of men, as fierce as himself, in confederacies to invade others. Whatever use they made of this, whether they contented themselves to conquer and to ravage, or whether, as they had united by consent, they obliged their neighbours to unite with them by force, it seems that NINUS profited of their success to do the last. He extended his dominion by victory; and as he extended it, he confirmed it. Thus the Babylonian empire was founded by force of arms, and thus it was maintained, till, as force had raised it, force

force destroyed it, and illegal confederacies put an end to what illegal confederacies had begun.

IF we consider the true ends of society, to which the general nature and reason of things direct mankind, we shall find it hard to conceive how they could be induced to unite their families on any other motives than those of common utility, and common defence, against the little robbers that have been mentioned ; or how, when a superior force made them safe from these, they should chuse to become great robbers themselves, and to invade and conquer as if their happiness had depended more on subduing other governments, than on a wise and just constitution of their own. But if we consider the particular nature of man, wherein there is one principle that directs him agreeably to the general law of nature, and another which is nothing more than the impulse of appetites and passions that are of subordinate use in the human economy, but were not designed to be the laws of it, we shall easily conceive how the conduct of mankind has become in these cases, and almost in all others, repugnant to nature, reason, and their own common sense.

THE first impressions that are made on societies, like those on particular men, last long, and the worst longest. The character of a few eminent persons, nay of some one who has acquired fame, authority, and power, especially if he has had the legislative in matters religious as well as civil, becomes

becomes that of a nation, grows confirmed by custom, and passes for natural and reasonable in despite of nature and reason. This happens in particular states; and this has happened in the great commonwealth of mankind. If some men have been deified for the good, many have been so for the hurt, they did; and conquerors, the most noxious of all animals, have become objects of adoration. However unlike nations may be to nations in their dispositions and manners, all of them; even the weakest; seek their own advantage real or imaginary, at the expence of others. Thus have the civil societies of men acted towards one another from their primitive institution: for if some set the example, the others soon followed it; and whilst every particular state has gone through various forms of government and revolutions of fortune, the universal state of mankind has been little less than a state of perpetual anarchy. Families kept men out of that state of individuality which HOBSES, and even LOCKE, supposes: but political societies have been always individuals.

XV.

BESIDES the two manners that have been mentioned, in which civil societies were formed, there was a third, very near a-kin to the second, that came into frequent use when the numbers of people increased in some countries faster than their

industry, and the order of their government, made provision for them; or when, for some other reason, the greatest part of a community, and the sovereign power in it resolved to drive out a smaller part that they judged noxious to the whole. This manner of establishing new governments when it was done by force, and it was seldom done with the consent of the invaded, was full as illegal, relatively to the law of nature, in the invaders, however softened by pretences of necessity, as the second. It was more bloody too, when they who defended their antient possessions were more able to resist, and they who sought new habitations were more numerous, than either of them had been when kingdoms and states were first formed, and colonies were first planted. The inhabitants of Gaul were grown so numerous, that in the very beginning of the Roman empire, in the reign of the elder TARQUIN, the celtic Gauls, who sacked Rome two hundred years afterwards, began to send their colonies abroad, at the instigation of their king AMBIGATUS*. He thought it necessary to exonerate his kingdom over-crowded with people, “exonerare *praegravante turba regum*.” He authorised the expeditions, by setting his nephews at the head of them, by giving them commissions to settle wherever the gods should direct by auguries, “in quas dii dedissent auguriis sedes,” and by levying such formidable armies for this purpose as no nation should be able to resist,

* Liv. I. v.

“ ne

"ne quae gens arcere advenientes posset." This account, that *Livy* gives of the Celtic invasions, may serve, in some sort, for those which other nations made on the Roman provinces, long after his time, and in the decline of that empire. The Ostrogoths, the Visigoths, the Vandals, and the Lombards, to whom the Franks, though an assemblage of adventurers perhaps, rather than one people, may be added, were the principal nations, who broke down the barriers of the Roman empire, and who established themselves in several provinces on the ruins of it. They were all detached to seek new habitations from the various and numberless families and societies of people who inhabited Scythia, that is, the immense extent of country beyond the Rhine and the Danube, as far as the Baltic northward, and the Euxine and the Caspian, at least, eastward. We know little about them whilst they remained in their deserts, and that little is very confused, and no doubt very fabulous. But this in general is certain, their numbers increased so much in every society, and the fertility of the country which every society possessed, as well as their skill to improve it, was so little proportionable to the wants of such numbers, that they were continually sending forth new colonies to seek new habitations, one at the expense of the other, driving and driven out by turns. The same necessity, and the same habits of invading, continued when the Roman empire, divided by *CONSTANTINE*, and weakened by his christian successors, was no longer able to repel

their incursions. They had too, besides necessity, another strong temptation at this time. The expeditions they undertook were in themselves more inviting than any of the former, “ haud paulo “ laetiorem viam dii dabant,” as LIVY says, when he compares that of BELOVESUS into Italy, with that of SIGOVESUS into the hercynian forest. They removed to better climates, to countries more fruitful, or more cultivated, as well as more adorned, than their own; and the surprize of ATHANARICUS, king of the Visigoths, who had made a peace with GRATIAN for presents, and principally for victuals, when he came to Constantinople, at the invitation of THEODOSIUS, is nothing less than surprising, though JORNANDES describes it to have been extreme.

A MULTITUDE of examples might be brought of kingdoms and states, that arose from such transmigrations as these, of Greeks, of Phenicians, and of other people. Sometimes they were formed by agreement, a few instances of which are to be found in history and tradition, but much oftener by violence, and sometimes by such circumstances of cruelty as were sufficient to exterminate the lawful possessors: one instance of which, besides those already pointed out, requires a particular mention in this place. It is not only to be reputed more authentic than any other, because it makes a part, and a principal part of sacred history, but it is more full and more marvellous in all the particular circumstances of it, and shews another

another occasion, besides that of a too great increase of people, on which one part of a community was desirous to seek out new habitations, or was compelled to it by the other. The wandering family of ABRAHAM, that had hovered long about Egypt, and had gone thither often for bread, to the want of which these pastors were much exposed, settled in that country at last, under the protection of JOSEPH, and continued in it above two centuries. That they did not attempt to establish a government of their own in it, like other strangers who came from barren into fruitful countries, is easily accounted for by the smallness of their number, as well as by the situation of JOSEPH, and their relation to him. But it is not so easy to account for the patience with which they bore, after the death of JOSEPH, a cruel servitude of fourscore years, to which the tyranny of the Egyptians had reduced them, when their number increased in every generation so vastly, that they could bring, at the time of the exode, six hundred thousand fighting men into the field. This very increase might seem incredible in any other history, notwithstanding the calculations that have been made to shew that it does not exceed the natural multiplication of a people among whom polygamy and concubinage are established. But admitting these immense numbers, and this extreme patience of the Israelites, naturally impatient, rash, and unruly, to be consistent; admitting that the expectation of a promised land, whereof their father ABRAHAM had taken posseſſion

sion for them by erecting altars in it, as the Spanish adventurers took possession of several countries in America by erecting crosses in them, which they conquered afterwards, and claimed by virtue of this right of possession to belong to them: admitting this expectation, I say, as an additional reason why the Israelites submitted to their bondage so long, and made no attempt to establish an independent kingdom or commonwealth in Egypt; yet will it be hard to conceive how they could find it so difficult to withdraw themselves out of this country, when Moses determined them to it. An army of six hundred thousand men was sufficient to have conquered Egypt. The Arabians probably, and the Persians certainly, conquered it with a less force than they might have employed merely to march out of it.

SUCH considerations may lead one to think that the accounts pagan authors give of their exode are not wholly fabulous, and that it is an example in point of the case I assumed, the case of people driven out of some communities because they were for some reason or other not only burdensome, but noxious to them. The Israelites were not guilty of sedition nor rebellion. They bore their stripes patiently. But as these stripes made them willing to leave the country, an epidemical infectious distemper in the Lower Egypt might make PHARAOH desirous to drive the inhabitants of that part of his kingdom into the neigh-

neighbouring deserts; and if he followed them to the red sea, it might be rather to recover the jewels, and the vessels of gold, and silver, which they had stole under the pretence of borrowing, than to stop them and to bring them back. TERTULLIAN* has preserved a tradition which favors this supposition; for he relates that the Egyptians sent messengers to MOSES in the desert to demand restitution, that the Israelites on their side demanded to be paid for their labor whilst in servitude, and that an account being stated, the balance seemed to be much in favor of the latter. Thus you see that the Egyptians robbed the Israelites, not the Israelites the Egyptians, as it has been thought.

MR. SELDEN has given us the same story †, and two others, as they are told with some little difference in the Babylonian Gemera, and a book called Beresith Rabba. This over-learned writer does not decide whether the facts are true, or whether they are rabbinical inventions, “ingenii rabbinici “figmenta.” They deserve, however, to be mentioned, because of their immediate relation to the anecdote just now quoted from TERTULLIAN, and to the right the Israelites had to the land of Canaan. The anecdote is much the same. The scene where it passed, and the persons among whom, are alone changed. JOSEPHUS, and others after him and like him, have founded high the

* Adv. MARCIONEM, Lib. ii. c. 20.

† De jure nat. et gent. juxta discip. Ebraeor. Lib. vii. c. 8.

reverence and munificence, "reverentiam atque
"munificentiam," says SELDEN, which ALEXANDER
the Great shewed to JADDUS the high priest, and
to the whole nation of the Jews, when he re-
ceived them under his protection; for they pur-
chased his protection, much as the priests of
JUPITER HAMMON did, one by flattering prophe-
cies, the other by a flattering genealogy. Three
controversies, then, were decided in their favor
at the tribunal of this prince against the Egyp-
tians, the Africans, and the Ismaelites, or Arabs,
according to the rabbins, those great compilers of
jewish traditions. The Egyptians demanded re-
stitution of the silver and gold which they had
lent the Israelites about a thousand years before at
the time of their exode, and insisted on the passage
where Moses says, that God gave his people favor
in the eyes of the Egyptians*. But GIBLAH BEN
PESISA the famous lawyer, who was counsel on
the other side, pleaded that, six hundred thousand
of the Israelites having served the Egyptians four
hundred and thirty years, the former had a just
demand on the latter for this service: and this
debt, which was computed for a time so much
longer than that of the bondage of the people of
Israel, and for numbers so much greater than
theirs at any time perhaps, but certainly during
the far greatest part of the time that they were
even known to the Egyptians; this debt, I say,

* Deum dedisse gratiam populo in oculis Aegyptiorum,
ut postulata concederent eis, sed mutuo darent quae ipsi pe-
terent.

we may well believe, exceeded the value of a few jewels, and vessels of gold and silver, and some raiment, or old cloaths, that they carried away with them. In short, the Egyptians were condemned, in this suit, at ALEXANDER's tribunal. So were the Africans, who demanded the land of Canaan, as the estate of their father CANAAN, and therefore their inheritance. The lawyer of the Jews quoted the curse pronounced against the son of HAM, more unfortunate than guilty; asked, if the possessions of slaves did not belong to their masters; insisted that the Africans were still such to his clients in equity, though not in fact; and sent them away in confusion. The cause of the Ismaelites, who pretended to be co-heirs with the Israelites, came on last; but they were soon silenced by producing the will of ABRAHAM, as MOSES recorded it, and in which the patriarch gives all his estate to ISAAC, except some legacies to the children he had by his concubines. Well might SELDEN say, that these suits were of a wonderful nature, “ *miraे sunt hæ disceptationes forenses*,” wherein both sides agreed to have the cause decided by arguments drawn from the law of the Jews, from their history, and from their interpretations of both, without any regard to a prescription of so many ages. But it is time that I return to speak of the manner in which the Israelites proceeded in the acquisition of new habitations, and in forming not only one commonwealth the more in the world, but the most singular establishment, ecclesiastical and civil, that ever was formed; for such it

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It must be allowed to have been, unless any one shall think that it appears to us more singular than it really was, because we do not know all, as we know some of the laws, customs, and pretensions of other antient nations.

WHEN I include with the Israelites in this transmigration many of the other inhabitants of the Lower Egypt, and suppose that a common distemper rather, than a common religion, unless that religion was idolatry, united them in it, nothing is assumed unreasonably, as every one, who considers how little fit the Israelites, so prone to idolatry themselves, were to convert others from it, must agree. But whatever the religion of this mixed multitude of Israelites and Egyptians was before they put themselves under the conduct of MOSES, they became the same people in this, and in every other, respect afterwards. They entertained the same hopes, and marched with confidence under the same leader to conquer new habitations. Well might they march with this confidence, when miracles accompanied them in one continued series: and it is even surprising that they should despise at any time, after the first miracle had been wrought at the passage of the red sea, though JOSEPHUS goes out of his character on this occasion, and, instead of magnifying, diminishes the wonder, by comparing this passage to that of ALEXANDER's army, who marched on the strand, or waded through shallow water along the pamphilian coast.

THERE

THERE were, besides the miracles, many circumstances in this famous transmigration of the Israelites, which deserve our notice for their particularity. One of these is so much to the present purpose, that it must be mentioned. The Israelites remained forty years in the desert before they undertook the conquest of the promised land ; a time sufficient to wear out the leprosy, if they were afflicted with that distemper, as profane history asserts, the authority of which must not be lightly rejected, since Jews and Christians both are so glad to lean upon it whenever it serves to explain or confirm any point of sacred chronology or history, and since the impertinence of thinking it sufficient for that purpose, and insufficient for any other, would be too gross. There is another reason given, in the history ascribed to Moses, why the Israelites were kept so long in the desert. When they came to the borders of the promised land, they muunied, distrusted God, who was already declared their God, their king, and the general of their armies. They threatened to chuse another leader and to return to Egypt. Upon this provocation it is said that God resolved to keep them, as he did keep them, wandering in the wilderness till the whole generation, of twenty years and upwards, except JOSHUA and CALEB, was dead. Then, and not sooner, they passed the Jordan,

To this reason, founded solely in the anger of God, may we not presume to add another, which
pro-

proceeded from political considerations? When, I say, political considerations, I mean those of Moses, not those of God. Far be it from me to account for the reasons on which the economy of Providence proceeds, when these reasons are not plainly revealed to me in the word, or works of God. Far be it from me even to assume that infinite wisdom is directed by considerations of human policy. But it is neither licentious, nor profane, to guess at those which the lawgiver of the Jews might have, and I shall do it on this occasion without any scruple.

As soon as Moses had brought the mixed multitude into the desert, the decalogue was given, and other laws were published. He kept them in this station more than a year, and during that time the sanhedrim was established, many laws, political, judicial, and ceremonial, were promulgated, and an entire system of religion and civil government was formed. All these institutions were enforced, not only by miracles, but by a most rigorous punishment of offenders; witness, among several, that massacre which the Levites made of three thousand men in one day, when they were commanded, without any other form of proceeding, to take every man his sword, and to slay his neighbour. Seven or eight and thirty years of such government as this, of a theocracy, wherein Moses, who conversed familiarly with God, spoke in his name, and delivered, and executed his orders,

orders, could not fail to make strong impressions, and to form strong habits in a new generation of men, who had been bred up under it. To confirm these impressions, and these habits, at the end of the fortieth year, just before the death of MOSES, this legislator renewed the covenant; so it was called, between God and this people, repeated the law, exhorted them by promises and threatenings to a strict observation of it, and sent them forward, not to conquer and subdue, but to exterminate a whole race, who were devoted by God to destruction, and whose country had been given to his favorite people, the Israelites, some ages before, even before they were a people.

OTHER nations, those for instance who established new governments in several provinces of the Roman empire, conquered, and subdued; but did not seek to exterminate. The Franks proceeded thus in Gaul, the Visigoths in Spain, the Ostrogoths and the Lombards in Italy. Driven out of their old habitations by force, or by want, they sought for new ones in better climates, and countries more fruitful than their deserts. Their spies visited the lands they designed to conquer; and as that "which flowed with milk and honey" tempted the Israelites, those that abounded with bread, and fruits, and wine, invited them. But when they had defeated all opposition by the force and terror of their arms, they ceased to be enemies, and the victorious and the vanquished soon became one people. They mixed together and lived under common laws,

laws. But this could never be the case between the Israelites and any other nation. The first principle of their policy, ecclesiastical and civil, was insociability: and accordingly their manners were rendered unsuitable to the common nature and genius of mankind, as that great divine Dr. BARRON expresses himself, in his Exposition of the creed. "They were a chosen people, they were " holy, and the rest of mankind profane." God dictated their law, he instituted, nay he administered their government, for which purpose he resided among them, and the Levites carried him before them in a wooden trunk, between the cherubim *, as your priests pretend to carry him about in a gold or silver box. In a word, as abject as this people had been in Egypt, MOSES had taught them to think more highly of themselves in the desert, and they came out of it the most insociable nation upon the earth; so insociable, that they could be nothing less than tyrants when they conquered, nor any thing better than slaves when they were conquered. This has been their case too. Their traditions boast a few centuries of prosperity and triumph; but in almost all ages, before the coming of CHRIST, as well as since, they have been, what TACITUS calls them, "vileissima pars servientium." As they were formed to this character of insociability and inhospitality in the desert, so they came out of it, like beasts of prey, thirsting after blood. The Huns, begot

* Arca cherubinis instructa, Dei vehiculum, et praesentiae suae pignus. SPEN. De theo. Jud.

by devils, who inhabited mount Caucasus, on scythian witches*, shewed less inhumanity when they were conducted by an hind, whom they followed, as a guide sent them by the gods, into Europe†. ATTILA extended his conquests further than JOSHUA; but it may be doubted whether he shed more blood. More cool blood he did not most certainly. ATTILA gave quarter often, JOSHUA never; and the five kings who hid themselves in a cave at Makkeda, and who were murdered by the latter, after he had destroyed their armies, and made himself master of their country, would have been spared by the former. It was criminal among the Israelites in his time, and it was so much later, to be content with conquest, and with spoil, or to shew mercy to those they had robbed.

By such a conduct, as we have described agreeably to the scriptures, this Egyptian colony established itself in Palestine, and formed a civil society in the last mentioned manner. There was not above one city, I think, with whom they made peace. None escaped the edge of their swords, except such as they could not conquer, and such as found refuge in foreign countries. Some found it among the Phenicians: for to say that the Phenicians descended from these refugees, is to affirm what neither has been nor can be proved. Some found it in other countries, in Afric very

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probably, since PROCOPIUS* speaks of pillars that remained in the Tingitana' with this inscription, " We are they who fled from the face of JOSHUA the robber, the son of NANE." Thus you may see how the prophecy of NOAH was fulfilled, which seems so plain to BOCHART, and other great scholars, and which is so little intelligible in the terms and in the application of them. But whatever becomes of the prophecy, the conquest of CANAAN by this colony from Egypt is the strongest example, that can be produced, of the mischiefs brought on mankind in the establishing of civil societies by violence, and therefore much to my present purpose.

XVI.

THOUGH the establishment of civil societies originally, and the maintenance of them since, have caused, in the order of providence, perpetual wars, and much of that misery which injustice and violence bring on the world, " tot bella per or-
" " bem, tam multae scelerum facies," yet the necessity of establishing and maintaining them arises from the constitution of human nature, and is therefore indispensible. The great commonwealth of mankind cannot be reduced under one government, nor subsist without any. Just so we may observe that the laws and constitutions of particular societies are every where various, in a multitude of instances opposite, and in many absurd.

* In Vandalicis.

Laws and constitutions are however necessary to be made, and, when they are made, to be kept: so that we may apply to all these cases a passage in **TERENCE**, much more properly than it is applied by **GROTIUS** in favor of absolute power *, “ **Aut haec cum illis sunt habenda, aut illa cum his amittenda sunt.** ”

BUT now, since the law of nature tends to promote the peace and happiness of mankind, and since this law is immutably the same at all times, and in all places, for which reason **ARISTOTLE** compared it to fire, that warms or burns alike in Persia and in Greece; how comes it to pass that the means prescribed by it answer the ends of it so ill? The answer is short, but full: because these means are employed by men whose imperfection is such, that all they do must be, of course, imperfectly done. Whether they are compounded of two substances, or no, may be doubted: but that they have in one substance, or one nature, two principles of determination, cannot be doubted. Affections and passions, excited by immediate objects of apparent good, are therefore continually in action; and are excited independently of the will, which they determine afterwards. But reason is a sluggard, that cannot be so excited. Reason must be willed into action: and as this can rarely happen when the will is already determined by affections and passions, so, when it does hap-

* *De jure belli et pacis*, L. i. c. 3. **TER.** **Heaut.**

pen, a sort of composition generally follows between the two principles: and if affections and passions cannot govern absolutely, nor even subject reason to serve as their instrument, they require and obtain more indulgence from her than they deserve, or than she would shew them if she was entirely free from their force, and from their seduction.

THESE reflections, which have been touched upon already, may account for the unnatural manner in which the law of nature has been executed by civil societies; and for the absurd manner in which it has been copied, and improved too, as they pretend, by civil laws. Had the reverse of all this been done in a closer conformity to the law of nature, the moral state of mankind had been truly paradisiacal; but it would not have been human. We should not have been the creatures we were designed to be, and a gap would have been left in the gradation of created intelligences. The tables of the law of nature are hung up, as it were, in the works of God, and are made obvious to the sight of man, not because he is able to observe them in their whole extent and in every part alike, but that he may keep them constantly in view, and depart as little as possible, in the midst of so many infirmities and so many temptations, from them. God has shewn us wherein our wisdom, our happiness, and the perfection of our nature consist; and he has left us to pursue these ends by the use of our reason. But, reason

not being given to all alike, and being very imperfectly given to those who possess the greatest share, our wisdom, and our happiness are very imperfect likewise; and the state of mankind is, upon the whole, a very imperfect state. We look up much higher than we are able to rise.

WHATEVER violations of these laws may have been frequently committed, by particular men, and upon particular occasions, none that were deemed to be such, and perhaps few that might be called such strictly, have been enacted into laws, or have grown up into established customs, by the plenary, or less plenary, permission which civilians speak of; one of which gives a right to do, and the other exempts from punishment for doing. I scarce believe, on the credit of antient and modern authors, many of the stories which are told concerning the manners of people, whom they call savage or barbarous. But, if I believed them all, I would still maintain that there were in Greece, and at Rome, as many things repugnant to the law of nature enjoined, or at least permitted, as can be produced from the relations we have of the people of Colchos, of the Massagetae, or of the Getulians; and further, that, if there are not in our civilised and enlightened age as many, there are some that exceed, in injustice and inhumanity, all that we are told of Iroquois, Brasilians, or the wildest inhabitants of African deserts. The great and principal difference lies here: our legal violations of natural law have a solemn varnish of policy, and

even of religion, which the casuists of the law and those of the gospel throw over them, and which always disguise, though they cannot always hide them. Illiterate savage nations have no such varnish to employ, and their laws and customs appear to every eye, but their own, as unnatural and abominable as they really are. To this it may be added, that they who can write have a great advantage over those who cannot, in all such cases. They can extenuate and exaggerate matters of fact, and they seldom fail to do it with no more regard to truth, than is just necessary to make the falsehood pass. If we had the history of Canaan writ by a Canaanite, that of Carthage by a Carthaginian, or that of Mexico and Peru by a Mexican and Peruvian, figure to yourself how the hospitality, the fidelity, the innocence, and simplicity of manners, of all these people, would be exemplified in various instances, and what further proofs would be brought of the ferocity, the treachery, the injustice, and cruelty of the Israelites, the Romans, and the Spaniards, of the first and the last especially.

It has been said that “ the tables of natural law “ are hung up in the works of God, and are ob-“ vious to the sight of man.” They are so. They are so obvious, that no man, who is able to read the plainest character, can mistake them; and therefore no political society ever framed a system of law in direct and avowed contradiction to them. No, not even the Jews, who might think, and who did think, that they had little concern in the law
of

of nature, since the author of nature had given them a particular law. They might justify their neglect of the former in much the same manner that OMAR justified the order he gave for burning the Alexandrian library; and, by what some of their rabbins have said, they seem to do little else. If the law of nature contains nothing more than the written and oral law of MOSES, it is unnecessary, might they say: and the saying would be worthy of them. If it contains any thing which is not in the law of MOSES, or which differs from that, it ought to be destroyed. But, however, they acknowledged in some sort a law of nature, since they acknowledged a law antecedent to that of MOSES, and given to all the sons of NOAH.

UPON the whole, the law of nature is too evident, and too important, not to have been always the law of laws. Such it has been reputed, and as such it has been respected, not only by the most famous legislators and philosophers, but by those who made the first rude essays towards the establishment of civil government. Inward consciousness, and outward observation, could not fail to make it known to them, and to the fathers of families, or the patriarchs of mankind before them. The errors about it, and the contradictions to it, that abound, and have always abounded, in the laws and customs of societies, proceed from causes of a very different nature, and very consistent with all that has been said of it. The law is plain, but the precepts it contains are general, Reason collects

them easily from the whole system of God's works, from the constitution of human nature, the consequences of human actions, and the invariable course of things. But then to make the greatest part of these general precepts as useful to human kind as the divine lawgiver intended them to be, reason has a further task assigned her. Reason must be employed to make proper and necessary deductions from these precepts, and to apply them in every case, that concerns our duty to God and man, according to the different relations in which we all stand to both, and the different places we hold in society.

Now human reason being at best as fallible as it is, and having been as little informed by experience as it was in the early ages when mankind began to gather into political societies, a multitude of false deductions and wrong applications could not fail to be made: for nothing can be more true than this observation, that the difficulty of applying general, and even common, notions to particulars, is one great cause of the errors and misfortunes of mankind. These deductions and applications were made diversly among divers people: and every one accepting those of their own growth for true dictates of nature and reason, it is easy to conceive what numberless prejudices they produced, and how the laws, customs, opinions, and manners of nations have been rendered as various, and as opposite in the very same respects, as they are and have always been. These prejudices, for so they may be properly named, were at first universally, as

as they are still in many parts of the world, the prejudices of real ignorance. Those of fantastic knowledge succeeded these, wherever men advanced from simplicity to refinement, “ *a necessariis ad elegantiora:*” and which of these have done most hurt may be disputed. Thus much is certain: There were prejudices of superstition to corrupt religion; and prejudices in favor of licentiousness and of tyranny both to corrupt the first principles of civil government, and to perpetuate error: so that when men of different families and countries, and all fraught with different prejudices, mingled one way or other in the same societies, it is no wonder that their systems of religion and government were such as we find them in all ages.

THE confusion was so great that the laws of nature, and those of positive institution, were but ill distinguished, and that some, or all, of the first kind passed for laws of the second, whilst some of the second passed for laws of the first. Such examples may be found, particularly among the Jews, about whom, of all the antient nations, we are the most concerned to be inquisitive, and of whom it is hard to say whether their traditions, or their reasonings upon them, are most precarious. They acknowledged in some sort, as it has been said, a law of nature, since they acknowledged a law antecedent to that of Moses, and unwritten precepts of universal and perpetual obligation. The rectitude of these precepts is manifest, and unknown to no man, “ *rectitudo est manifestior, utpote*

“ nemini fere non agnita,” as Mr. SELDEN says*, speaking after the rabbins. But these precepts were not collected by human reason, from the constitution of nature. They were revealed by God himself to NOAH, the Jews affirm; and were designed for all his posterity, as they were renewed to the Israelites, at the station in Mara, with a precept about keeping the sabbath, and other additional precepts. I enter into these particulars in order to observe only, what an unnatural jumble this people made of seven principal precepts, which composed, according to them, a code of natural and universal law, and the original source of all law, “ primordialem legem et matricem omnium praeeceptorum Dei †.” There is nothing, perhaps, more absurd nor ridiculous in the whole Jewish system.

No doubt can be entertained whether the law of nature forbids idolatry, blasphemy, murder, theft, and, I think, incest too, at least in the strictest sense of the word, and in the highest instance of it. But surely none, except rabbins, could have blended up with these a precept that forbids the eating the member of a living animal; which is such a piece of cruelty, that I shall not believe on the word of MAIMONIDES, of ARNOBIUS, or any other author, that the kings of the nations, or the most enthusiastic bacchanals, did it in the celebration of their idolatrous feasts, nor even that the Israelites, who were so prone to spill

* *De jure nat. et gent. juxta &c.* l. i. c. 10.

† *Ib. blood.*

blood, were as fond of swallowing it in this filthy manner, fresh and reeking. This circumstance alone would be sufficient to prove, that the *praecepta Noachidarum* were an invention of the talmudists, whose practice it was to forge, and who wanted skill and knowledge to make their forgeries probable. A natural law against a practice, to which there is no inducement in human nature, though men are carnivorous animals, is most rabbinically, that is, impertinently, assumed. He must be a rabbin too, who is able to discover how a precept, to regulate judicial proceedings, can be said to have made another head of natural law. SELDEN * treats of this in the last place, because he thinks it relative to the other six, which would have been given in vain, if judgments had not been established to punish the violation of them. But how could all these judgments be established by one of these seven precepts? By judgments the talmudists understand all constitutions, customs, actions, circumstances, decisions, and law cases, which are of moment in criminal causes. It would be too ridiculous to suppose judgments, in this sense, established by a single precept of the law of nature. What did this precept then command? A tribunal to be erected for the trial of all offences against these laws, or a council chamber wherein new laws, for enforcing these, should be made †? Or did God, by one precept of natural

* Lib. vii. c. 4.

† ---Domus judicij nunc pro tribunali aut foro---nunc pro loco aut coetu, quo sanciuntur novae leges---sumitur. Ib. and

and universal law, confirm and ratify all future judgments that should be given, and all future laws that should be made by human authority, to secure the observation of six other precepts? I can think so the less, because the judgments of his chosen people were often repugnant to the law of nature, truly so called, in particular instances; and, because, in general, a spirit of injustice, which established one rule for themselves and another for every other person, ran through all their judicial proceedings.

ANOTHER instance of that confusion which arose in men's notions concerning laws of nature, and laws of positive institution, might be drawn from the decree of the first christian council, in which the apostles and the elders imposed no other load on the converts from paganism, than abstinence from things offered to idols, from blood, from things suffocated, and from fornication, according to the copy we have of it; all of which, as well as circumcision, and other observances from which these converts were exempted, made parts of the mosaical institution*. But it appears by antient manuscripts, and by the citations of IRENAEUS, and CYPRIAN, as well as by other authorities, that another duty, which was not most certainly of mosaical institution, and was plainly a moral obligation arising from the real law of nature, had been contained in the original decree. The converts were to abstain from doing to others what they would not that others should do to

* SELDEN Lib. vii. c. 12.

them.

them. This instance, and the former, might be more explained. But enough has been said on these two subjects: and we may proceed to take notice of those instances, wherein things are, and have been, forbid by civil or ecclesiastical laws, which are not only permitted in the fullest manner by the law of nature, but seem much more conformable to it than the institutions opposed to them; and of others, wherein things directly forbidden by the law of nature are, and have been, permitted, or commanded, by civil or ecclesiastical laws, and by both.

XVII.

THAT the human, like every other, species of animals should multiply by the copulation of the two sexes, and be propagated by their care to nurse and breed up their young, is undoubtedly a law of nature. Self-love, the great spring of human actions, prompts to both. But as it is more immediately determined, and more strongly stimulated by instinct, and by nature, to one, than to the other; it became necessary to give this principle, by reason and by art, all the additional strength that could be given by them, or, at least, to let it lose none that it had. For this purpose it was necessary that parents should know certainly their own respective broods, and that, as a woman cannot doubt whether she is the mother of the child she bears, so a man should have all the assurance law can give him that he is

is the father of the child he begets ; for a likeness of features would not amount to a sufficient assurance, though I have read of a country where women were common, and where paternity was ascertained no other way. Thus matrimony forms families, which could not be formed without it ; and families form states, which could not be formed without them. It was this first and natural union which preceded, and prepared mankind for, political or civil union : and the bonds of this second union were more effectually strengthened by those of paternal and filial affection, and of consanguinity, than they could have been by those alone of accidental interests liable to vary, and of covenants liable to be broken. On such principles, and for such purposes, I presume that matrimony was instituted. They are evidently derived from the law of nature. The institution therefore is conformable to the law of nature, as far as it is subservient to these ends. But when it is carried further than these ends require, and that which is consistent with them, or even conducive to them, is forbid, it is, in every such respect, a mere arbitrary imposition.

GREAT attention has been had in every well-constituted government to promote the multiplication of mankind : and this attention must be always necessary ; for if the human race is daily increasing, it is daily decreasing likewise ; and it would be trifling to maintain that celibacy is less hurtful, or polygamy less necessary, than they were formerly,

formerly, on CUMBERLAND's vain assumption * that the earth is sufficiently peopled. Men who were advanced in years, and had never been married, were stigmatised at Sparta; and as well there, as at Rome, and in many other places, great immunities, prerogatives, and other encouragements were granted to those, who had a large legitimate issue. The talmudists carry the obligation of getting children so far, that they declare the neglect of it to be a sort of homicide. " *Quicunque Israelita liberis operam non dat, est velut homicida †.*"

Two sorts of polygamy are distinguished by the civilians. That of one man who has several wives, and that of one woman who has several husbands. All the ends of matrimony are answered by the first. It has therefore prevailed always, and it still prevails generally, if not universally, either as a reasonable indulgence to mankind, or as a proper, and in the early ages a necessary, expedient to increase their numbers. Such it is, no doubt; such it must be, in the order of nature: and when we are told that it has not this effect among the people who retain the custom at this day, either the fact, asserted by men who cannot be competent judges of it, may be untrue; or sodomy and abortions, in conjunction with other unnatural causes, may prevent the natural effect of polygamy. The ends of mat-

* Cap. 6.

† SELDEN *Uxor Ebraica.* Lib. i.

mony are not answered by the second, which has been, I suppose, a double polygamy, wherever it has been practised; since we cannot believe that the superior sex ever submitted their prerogative to the inferior, and that several men became the property of one woman, although mention be made by STRABO of the Sabeans, among whom one woman was the wife of a whole family. 'She lay with the eldest all night, and drudged on with the rest all day. Other examples of the same kind might be quoted from modern travellers, who speak of some countries where every woman is married to seven husbands, and of others where the wife may, and the husband may not, call in assistants to the bed: by which custom the prerogative of the antient patriarchs would be reversed in favor of women, and they would have, if I may say so, their male concubines. But, to proceed on the more probable hypothesis: the divine PLATO approved, the Spartan lawgiver instituted, a community of wives; and CAESAR reports that there were in our Britain certain amicable societies of both sexes, wherein every woman was the wife of ten or twelve men, and every man the husband of as many women. The most admired philosophers, the most famous legislators, and several of the least civilised people, Britons and others, admitted the same absurd abuse of matrimony, and destroyed one end at least of its institution, by making the ascertainment of fathers impossible, as DIODORUS SICULUS * says

* Lib. ii.

that of mothers too was made by a nation in India, where the children were changed as soon as born.

THE first sort of polygamy, for the second was too contrary to nature and good policy to spread wide, or to last long, was allowed by the monaical law, and was authorised by God himself. There is, indeed, a very loose restraint laid on a king, in the xviith chapter of Deuteronomy. He is not to multiply wives, lest his heart should be turned away ; neither is he to multiply greatly silver and gold. Moderation was prescribed in both passages : but wives and wealth suitable to the kingly state were implied in both. The number of one, and the quantity of the other, are not determined. They were left, probably, to the judgment of the king himself, for whom the law was made : but the rabbins, who made many arbitrary laws of their own, under pretence of interpreting divine laws, as other rabbins have continued to do, thought fit to limit the number of queens, or of queens and concubines both, to eighteen ; the ridiculous reasons for which specific number may be seen in SELDEN's treatise, called *Uxor Ebraica**. By the same authority priests were allowed to have but one wife, and all other persons but four ; the reason for which number it is more easy to imagine, than to express decently.

* Lib. i. c. 8.

THE zeal of the Jews to promote the observation of the precept to increase and multiply, was so great, that, besides the establishment and regulation of polygamy, their doctors descended into many particulars for the same purpose, and among the rest were careful to appoint stated periods, beyond which it was not lawful to neglect the performance of conjugal duty in any form of life. The periods were marked even to the artificer, the countryman, and the seaman: and the wife had her remedy if the law was not observed. The prodigious numbers, of which this nation appears to have consisted, from the exode to the destruction of their city by TITUS VESPASIAN, and the constant reparation of these numbers after so many massacres, captivities, and other desolations, must be ascribed, as I think, if we believe them to have been real, to that prodigious and constant increase of people which a well ordered polygamy caused.

THE writers, who pretend sometimes that polygamy has not the effect ascribed to it, employ, at other times, this very increase as an argument against it. But surely the argument, as well as the pretence, is false. Increase of people must be always an advantage, and can never be hurtful to any state, no nor cumbersome to particular families, unless the want of order, good policy, and industry make it so. To talk of a commonwealth sinking under it's own weight by the increase

crease of people, as PUFFENDORF does in one place*, might have appeared reasonable to those ancient nations of Europe and Asia, who sent so many colonies abroad for fear of starving at home; and would, I question not, appear so at this time to the nations of Africa, who sell their children not only to procure themselves brandy and tobacco, or other wares, but to prevent an overstock of inhabitants. The truth however is, and it may be easily demonstrated, that numbers of people are strength and wealth to every country; and that the law of nature, which directs the increase of them, is in this instance, what it is in all others, the law of good policy.

Thus therefore the matter stands. This sort of polygamy is quite conformable to the law of nature, and provides the most effectual means for the generation and education of children. In the other state, mankind may multiply perhaps as much in the first instance of begetting, but not in the second of breeding up, for want of an equal ascertainment of both the parents: and this defect may disappoint, to a great decree, the intention of nature. Monogamy, on the other hand, or the confinement of one husband to one wife, whilst they both live, for I shall use the word in this sense here, will unite the care of both parents in breeding up subjects of the commonwealth; but will not serve as effectually, nor in as great

* Lib. vi. c. 1.

numbers, to the begetting them. The prohibition of polygamy of the first kind is, therefore, not only a prohibition of what nature permits in the fullest manner, but of what she requires too in some manner, and often in a greater degree than ordinary, for the reparation of states exhausted by wars, by plagues, and other calamities. The institution of the second sort contradicts her intention in one part, as the institution of monogamy diminishes the effect of her law in another part. The prohibition is absurd, and the imposition arbitrary.

THE imposition is very antient; however, if it be as antient in Greece as CECROPS: and if this kind of matrimony was the most perfect, as many assert, there would be reason to wonder how the most perfect kind came to be established by an uninspired lawgiver among the nations, whilst the least perfect kind had been established by MOSES, the messenger and prophet of God, among his chosen people. The Romans took many things from the Greeks, as well as from the Etrurians, at the foundation of their monarchy, altho' PYTHAGORAS was no more the cotemporary of NUMA, than he was the scholar of EZECHIEL. But from whomsoever they took the institution of marriage, the matrimonial tables, and the oath which every married man was obliged to take before the censors, declared it to be for the procreation of children: and they made laws occasionally to encourage this procreation.

IF LYCURGUS, on whose principles every child was the child of the commonwealth, deemed it expedient for improving the several broods, that his citizens should cross them, by lying with the wives of one another; and if the ephori obliged one of their kings to take a second wife, when he would not part with the first, who was barren; the Romans needed to have made no great scruple of borrowing wives to increase or to mend their race: and CATO is said to have lent his MARCIA to HORTENSII. Nay, CAESAR intended to procure a law, which one of the tribunes had orders to propose, and by which every one should be authorised to take as many wives as he pleased, and such as he pleased, “liberorum quaerendorum “causa.” The passage may, indeed, have another sense; and if SUETONIUS, from whom it is taken, writ — “uxores—quas et quot vellet,” instead of “vellent,” it must mean that CAESAR intended the new prerogative for himself alone, as the occasion that introduces the anecdote, and the circumstance of directing the law to be proposed when he should be absent, “cum ipse abef-“set, may incline one to suspect. But, on the other hand, nothing can be more probable than this, that CAESAR considered, besides the constant waste of roman citizens, which the exposition of infants, and perhaps the severity of paternal power, but certainly their ordinary state of war, occasioned, the extraordinary loss of people, which the commonwealth had sustained in his

time by proscriptions and a long course of civil war. It is probable that he considered this: and it is therefore much more wonderful his successor should not think, after another proscription, and another civil war, of establishing polygamy, to repair these accumulated losses, than that he, the first CAESAR, should. This was not done, however: nor was polygamy established among the Romans before they were christians. It was less likely to be so afterwards: and if VALENTINIAN married two wives, and gave leave to his subjects to do the same, by a public edict, as the ecclesiastical historian SOCRATES says he did, his example was not followed. We may doubt too, whether that of SOCRATES, the philosopher I mean, was followed on the same occasion at Athens. DIOGENES LAERTIUS * relates that the Athenians decreed, when their city was depopulated by war and sickness, that every citizen might have, to increase the number of children, a second wife, besides her who was called his town wife, and of which sort he could have but one†. SOCRATES took the advantage of this decree, which set aside the law of CECROPS: and he despised, with a great elevation of mind, those who criticised his conduct, and threw out reproaches against him. This famous missionary of natural religion and law declared, by this action, that po-

* Vit. SÓCRAT.

† —Uti urbanum quidem unam uxorem cives ducerent, liceret autem et ex altera procreare liberos.

lygamy was against neither, and that the law of CECROPS had forbid what they allowed.

XVIII.

THE reasons that determined the lawgivers of Greece, and Rome, and of some few other states, to forbid a plurality of wives, which was permitted in almost all countries, may have been such as these. They saw that polygamy would create large families, and large families a greater expence than could be borne by men who were reduced to live in cities, and other fixed habitations, where property was distinguished, and where no one could afford to spend more than his legal possessions, his labor, and his industry, gave him. Monogamy was a sort of sumptuary law, and might be thought the more reasonable, because, even in those countries where polygamy was established, men were not permitted to marry more women than they were able to maintain.

ANOTHER reason, that served to confirm this institution, was the part assigned to the priests in it. DIONYSIUS HALICAR. * having observed how ill women had been used to keep their conjugal vow, even in countries where a very singular magistrate, a magistrate to preserve their chastity †, was appointed, speaks with great encomium of a law that ROMULUS made to attach every Roman

* Lib. ii. 24, 25. †---Cui mulierum castitas curae esset,

wife to her husband, by an entire participation of all his possessions and of his religious rites *. These sacred nuptials were celebrated by a solemn sacrifice, and by the eating together of a consecrated barley cake. The natural effect of this law and this religious ceremony was such, that during five hundred and twenty years there was no instance of a divorce at Rome; for so I understand the historian, who does not refer, according to my apprehension, to any express prohibition of divorces, in the case even of these marriages, by the law that established them, as some have imagined. Thus monogamy became, by the intervention of the priesthood, a religious, as well as a civil, institution. I might add, not improperly, nor untruly, that this institution has received at least an indirect support from the vices of husbands and wives, from those very abuses which it was designed by ROMULUS, and by other legislators, to reform. By entering into single marriages, men satisfied the natural desire of propagating their species, and acquired the means of having a legitimate issue; whilst nothing hindered them, nor their wives neither, except the want of opportunity, from indulging their lust with others, in spight of their sacred bonds, and the legal property they had in one another's persons. We may believe the more easily, that such considerations helped to reconcile pagans to the seeming constraint of single marriages, since we can

*---Omnium et bonorum et facrorum---

make no doubt that they have the same effect on christians, who think these marriages instituted by God himself immediately, as many of the former deemed them to be enjoined by the law of nature: for what authority does in one case, custom might very well do in the other: and it is much less strange that custom, which we call a second nature, should pass for the first and real nature, than that human authority should pass for divine.

BUT of all the reasons, by which we may account for the prevalence of single marriages, in opposition to polygamy, divorces constituted the principal and the most effectual. With them monogamy may be thought a reasonable institution. Without them it is an absurd, unnatural, and cruel imposition. It crosses the intention of nature doubly, as it stands in opposition to the most effectual means of multiplying the human species, and as it forbids the sole expedient, by which this evil can be lessened in any degree, and the intention of nature can be, in many cases, at all carried on. Although the first mention of divorces be made by ISAIAH, and JEREMIAH, occasionally, seven or eight hundred years after the law was given, they had been always in use among the Israelites: and as the right was derived, by their doctors, both from the natural and the mosaical law, so they were practised under no very strict regulations. I say nothing of the forms. The legal causes had a great latitude: a

divorce was sufficiently authorised when a woman did not find favor in the eyes of her husband, because of some turpitude in her person or behaviour, or even because he found another woman whom he thought handsomer, or whom it was more convenient to him to marry *. Thus the people of God had an advantage, in this respect, over other people. Plurality of wives might have made divorces less necessary. The defects in body or mind of one would be compensated by the perfections of the others ; or, if they proved all alike disagreeable, the husband had the resource of concubines. The case of the Romans, and all those nations where single marriages were established, was very different. He who had a barren wife could not fulfil the law of nature, nor swear without perjury, as he was obliged to do, that he kept a wife in order to have children by her ; and therefore CARVILIUS RUGA † acted very conscientiously when he was the first, if he was the first, to put away his wife. The law-casuists, who decide that barrenness is not a sufficient cause of separation, because it may be the misfortune, but cannot be imputed as the fault, of the woman, might as well decide that no accidental infirmity, which renders a man incapable of performing his office in the state, is a sufficient reason for removing him. The Romans paid no regard to such casuistry. They continued divorces in this,

* *Foeditatem personalem, negotium impudicum. Si invenierit aliam pulchriorem, aut fibi commodiorem.* SED. *De ux. ebraic.* † *DION. HAL.* ubi supra.

and many other cases; such, for instance, as ill management of family affairs, or an intolerable and incurable ill humor, which were the reasons, I presume, of CICERO's divorce from TERENTIA; and good reasons surely, since the husband may be ruined by one, and the peace of his whole life be destroyed by the other.

THE institution of divorces was of such absolute necessity where a plurality of wives was forbid, and of so much convenience where this plurality was allowed, that it continued on the same foot among the Romans till christianity was established fully in the empire; and that it continues still among the Jews in the east, if not practised, for prudential reasons, in the same manner, and as openly, in the west,

SELDEN gives a very particular account, in the third book of his Hebrew wife, of the occasion on which divorces were restrained: and it amounts to this. HILLEL and SAMMAEAS were of that set of men, the rabbins, who pretended to have authentic traditions, and certain interpretations of their law, conveyed down to them from MOSES; and who were, notwithstanding this oral rule of faith, of doctrine, and of manners, frequently in opposition, and at the head of different factions in the schools of the Jews. Two such factions had been formed, concerning the legal grounds of divorces, by HILLEL, and SAMMAEAS who had been his scholar, as GAMALIEL, the master of

faint

faint PAUL, is said to have been his nephew and his successor: and the disputes ran high between them whilst CHRIST was on earth. The Hillelians maintained the original right of repudiation, and such as it was practised, not only in the case of adultery, or turpitude, but in every other case, “ob omnimodam rem seu causam *.” The Sam-means insisted on a reformation of this custom, and on a new interpretation of the law, founded on a grammatical criticism. They confined the right of divorce to the case of turpitude alone. CHRIST decided the question in favor of the latter, and specified but one kind of turpitude. This decision appeared so strange to his disciples, that they were at a loss, as well as the Pharisees, to guess why then MOSES had established the right of divorce; for it is probable the notion had not prevailed amongst them, that God tolerated superstitious practices, or permitted even crimes to have the sanction of his law, as in the present case it is said that he did, because of the hardness of heart of their fathers. The disciples therefore cried out, that, if this was the case, it would be better not to marry. The Jews did not submit to this decision. The same dispute continued many years; and about seventy from the birth of CHRIST it was decided in favor of HILLEL by that oracle from heaven; “the daughter of the voice †,” which was heard at Jabne, not far from Jerusalem, and the place perhaps where the sanhedrim was then held. But the law of grace

* Ib. l. iii. c. 20.

† Filia vocis.

was

was superior, in time, to the natural and the mo-
saical law, among christians. It had a right to
be so; and, besides, we may believe very proba-
bly, and very piously, with JUSTIN the martyr,
that JOSEPH, having suspected the holy virgin to
have been got with child before her marriage, had
entertained thoughts of separating from a wife
whom he could not keep according to the laws of
his country *. We may believe too, on the foun-
dation of this anecdote, that christians were pre-
pared to understand the words of JESUS in a sense
the most restrictive of divorces, and the least fa-
vourable to that institution. I said, that the law
of grace was superior in time to the other; for
as little as we know what the practice of christians
was during the first three hundred years, we know
in general, that great relicts of judaism remained
long amongst them; that divorces were in use,
even those which wives signified to their husbands;
that the meaning of the word fornication was ex-
tended from the flesh to the spirit; and that this
institution was observed, admitted, denied, to
the time of CONSTANTINE, without any certain
rule at all; “aliter atque aliter,” says SELDEN †.
From that time downwards, emperors published
edicts; councils made decrees; fathers, and after
them schoolmen, advanced opinions; ecclesiasti-
cal and principally papal power increased; a new
jurisprudence, the child of usurpation, of igno-
rance, and bigotry, grew up under the care of

uxta patrios mores ejiciendam.

† Ib. c. 28.

the

the canonists; marriage was declared a sacrament, and this tie indissoluble.

XIX.

BEFORE we leave the subject of positive laws, ecclesiastical and civil, that forbid those things arbitrarily, and by mere will, which the laws of nature permit; we may properly enough take notice of some restrictions relatively to marriages, which have not been so hard to impose as the obligation of single marriages. Polygamy had been allowed in most nations; divorces, I believe, in all. It required time, therefore, to abolish institutions, both of which had revelation and reason on their side, and the last of which had been confirmed by universal practice. But it required neither time nor pains to continue the prohibition of marriages within certain degrees of consanguinity and affinity. The Jews, among whom christianity arose, held such incestuous marriages to be forbidden as much as adultery, sodomy, and bestiality. The Greeks, and the Romans, among whom christianity had the greatest increase, and the firmest establishment, seem to have held different opinions, at different periods, about the remoter degrees, but not to have varied about those in the ascending or descending lines; and the Romans, who made one state, were more uniform on this head than the Greeks, who were divided into many, and whose country produced many a whimsical philosopher that affected law-giving, besides PLATO. The nations among whom no regard

regard was paid to these degrees, but brothers mixed with sisters, fathers with their daughters, and sons with their mothers, were held in abomination, like all other nations, by the Jews, who were in return held in contempt by these and all others. These, and all others, were deemed barbarous by the Greeks and the Romans: so that their example might well have, as it had, no effect, in this respect, either on the Jews, the Greeks, or the Romans; tho two of them at least, the Egyptian and Babylonian, had been masters of the former in every sense, and tho the second and the third had received the first principles of all their knowledge, and perhaps the first use of letters, from the same, either immediately like the Greeks, or mediately thro the Greeks, like the Romans.

THAT the abhorrence of incestuous marriages should prevail among the Jews, is easily accounted for, since they founded it on a positive law of God. But how it came to prevail among the Greeks and the Romans, is not so clear. Was it founded among them on a law, and is it even an instinct of nature? This has been said, but cannot be maintained. They scarce deserve an answer, who would prove these marriages prohibited by the law of nature, on the supposition that there is a repugnancy in nature to any such copulations; as if consanguinity, like fire, produced an agreeable sensation at certain distances, and pain and abhorrence at a nearer approach; as if a multitude of nations, civilised and uncivilised, could have been

been determined to act unnecessarily against so strong an instinct of nature, as this repugnancy or abhorrence is assumed to be; and finally, as if the first men, who could not increase and multiply without committing incest, had been commanded to do it by the author of nature, against the law of that nature he had just before given them.

A GREAT deal of dull pains has been taken to inquire into the nature of shame, and to discover the motives of that modesty with which almost all mankind, even the most savage, conceal the parts, and remove out of sight to perform the act, of generation. How comes this about, say such writers, "when the propagation of so noble a creature "as man is in itself a work of honor and credit *?" The question might be sufficiently answered by saying, that the parts, destined to this pleasant and honorable use, are destined likewise to uses that are offensive to our senses; and that they shew by the necessity they are of to our being in one destination, and to the propagation of our species in another, a certain mortifying identity of nature with the vilest of the animal kind. These parts are placed, as it were, out of the way in the human fabric; and, in conformity to this indication, the custom of hiding them, and of retiring from the sight of others when we employ them to any purpose, has grown up in both sexes, and been confirmed by education. "Hanc naturae tam di-

* PUF. I. vi. c. 1.

"ligentem

“ ligentem fabricam imitata est hominum verecundia *.” Shame or modesty, according to TULLY, make us imitate nature in this instance: but I think that the latent principle of this shame, or modesty, is a vanity inherent in our nature, derived from an opinion of excellence and dignity. It is this that makes us fond of shewing, wherever we can shew it, how superior we are to other animals, and to hide, wherever we can hide it, how much we participate of the same nature.

OTHER reflections might be added to these, such particularly as furnish reasons for the solitude wherein the two sexes affect to copulate; among which perhaps an uncontrolled and undisturbed indulgence to their mutual lust would not be found the least. But to what purpose should this be done, when there is nothing in the assumed shame, even if we allow it to be natural, that has any more relation to incestuous, than to other, marriages? The shame of exposing their secret parts, and of copulating in public, was, to be sure, just as strong in those who contracted the first, as in those who contracted the second; and it is impossible to conceive that it can cause any natural abhorrence of one of these conjunctions more than of the other, or indeed of either. It remains therefore that this abhorrence is artificial, and that it has been inspired by human laws, by prejudice, and by habit.

* Cic. Offic. I. i.

BUT tho this be evidently true, yet it is true likewise that the degrees spoken of are to be distinguished; for tho the prohibition cannot be deduced, in any of them, from instinct, or animal nature; yet is it favoured by reasonable nature in some. The permission, that her laws give to conjunctions necessary to the propagation of the species of animals, may be conceived to be in the human less and more full, or absolute, according to the received distinction of legal permissions that I have somewhere mentioned. The conjunctions of fathers with their daughters, and of sons with their mothers, if they are thought permitted, must be thought to be so by the lowest sort of natural permission, not only for the reason SOCRATES gives in *XENOPHON*, the disparity of age, from which he supposed, not weakly, as it has been objected, but wisely, and providentially, that several inconveniences would arise; but for a reason of more importance, and of universal extent. The first societies, and those which composed all others, are family societies. These are natural; and the better they are regulated the more easily and the more surely will political societies, whose component parts they are, be put and maintained under good regulations. Parents are the chief magistrates of families; and every thing that tends to diminish a reverence for them, or to convert it into some other sentiment, diminishes their authority, dissolves the order of those little commonwealths, and introduces a licentiousness of manners, which they carry

carry with them and diffuse in the greater. This now must happen in some degree wherever the custom prevails, that fathers take their daughters, and sons their mothers, for wives or mistresses; whenever they do it actually, or may do it lawfully. I need not stay to prove and to illustrate this; but may conclude, on what has been said, that if natural law does not directly prohibit such conjunctions as these, it does not permit them neither in so full a manner, as to give them that sanction, which other marriages, that are reputed to be contrary to the law of nature, and that are called alike incestuous, have.

THE marriages of brothers and sisters, for instance, which stand in the very next degree, may be objected to, as they may be defended, by probable arguments drawn from political considerations: but no color of an argument can be drawn against them from the constitution of nature, in which all her laws are contained, and by which they are all promulgated. It may be said, and I find that something of this kind has been said, that, the intention of reasonable nature being not only to strengthen the bonds of society as much, but to improve sociability among men, and to extend it as wide, as possible, in opposition to that insociability which is so apt to grow up between distinct families and states; those positive laws, which forbid marriages in near degrees of consanguinity and affinity, are conformable to nature, and drawn by necessary consequences from her laws. For this

reason, it may be said that such marriages were forbidden among several of the most civilised nations in the pagan world, and that we find so many prohibitions in cases of affinity, as well as of consanguinity, in the eighteenth chapter of Leviticus. The more remote degrees were prohibited perhaps to fence in, and to secure the better an observation of the nearest: and this might be the more necessary because of the precedent practice of mankind, who had been constituted by God, at the creation, in a necessity of committing what was now forbidden, since they could not otherwise have obeyed his first and great precept, to increase and multiply. **EVE** was in some sort the daughter of **ADAM**. She was literally bone of his bone, and flesh of his flesh, by birth, if I may call it so; whereas other husbands and wives are so in an allegorical manner only. But, to pass this over, the children of the first couple were certainly brothers and sisters: and by these conjunctions, declared afterwards incestuous, the human species was first propagated. If you accept rabbinical authority, you may believe that **EVE** brought forth constantly twins, a male and a female, as pigeons, I think, are said to do: so that **CAIN** might marry the twin sister of **ABEL**, and **ABEL** the twin sister of **CAIN**. Whether this institution alters, and softens, the case any more, than that of the Lacedemonians, who were permitted to marry their sisters on the mother's side, but not on the father's; or than that of the Athenians, who might by law, or who did by custom, marry their sisters on the father's side, but not on

the mother's, as, we find by the example of ABRAHAM and SARAH, it was reputed lawful to do in the days of the patriarchs, let the great casuists of law and gospel decide. It may be said, on the other hand, that, if it be agreeable to the law of nature and of right reason, in many cases, to extend the bonds of society by a prohibition of marriages between persons too near a-kin, it is in many cases at least as agreeable to this law, to preserve possessions and wealth in the families to which they belong, and not to suffer them to be carried by any female caprice into others. Precautions to this effect have been taken by wise legislators; and that which MOSES took is remarkable in all its circumstances. He had made a law, on the application of the daughters of ZELOPHEHAD, whose cause he is said to have brought before the Lord; * by which, if a man died and had no son, his inheritance was to pass unto his daughter. But when the chief fathers of the families of the sons of JOSEPH came before MOSES and the elders of Israel †, to complain of this law, the precaution we speak of here was immediately added, and the law amended. MOSES declared in the name of God, that every daughter, who possessed an inheritance by virtue of the former law, should be obliged to marry one of the family of the tribe of her father, and no other: and the reason is annexed, "that the children of Israel may enjoy every man the inheritance of his fathers." In obe-

* Num. c. xxvii.

† Ibid. c. xxxvi.

dience to this law, the daughters of ZEOPHEHAD
“ were married unto their father’s brother’s sons.”

IT is evident on the whole, that marriages, within certain degrees of consanguinity and affinity, are forbid by political institutions, and for political reasons; but are left indifferent by the law of nature, which determines nothing expressly about them. The laws of nature are general; and in this case, as in all others, the particular application of them, and the means of securing their effect, are left to human prudence. “ Increase and multiply” is the law of nature. The manner in which this precept shall be executed with greatest advantage to society, is the law of man. When the latter promotes the execution of the former, without breaking any other general law of nature, it is conformable to this law. This may be done, and has been done, by different institutions of marriage. Which of these is the most effectual relatively to the precept of increasing and multiplying, and at the same time consistent with the whole tenor of natural law, reason and experience must decide. In the mean time, we may venture to assert that the most effectual to this purpose, under this condition, which ever it be, is the most conformable to nature, tho it be not a law of nature. To marry among our kindred, or to marry strangers, is equally effectual to the propagation of the species, altho polygamy and monogamy may not be so: and therefore, since there are political reasons for and against the marriages

riages referred to, the prohibition of either is merely arbitrary. It may be expedient on some occasions; but howsoever the prohibition turns, it is a law of will that forbids what the law of nature permits. As occasions are various, circumstances different, and will above all uncertain, so have these restraints on marriage been very inconsistently laid. In some places, or times, it was unlawful to marry a sister by the father's, and in others by the mother's side; or it was lawful to marry a cousin german, and not an aunt, as among the Jews by their mosaical law. But the most ridiculous of all these inconsistencies is to be found in that great repertory of inconsistencies and absurdities, the rabbinical system of religion and law. When a gentile became a "proselyte of justice*," he became, according to this system, a new man, and lost all his former relations by this regeneration. He could not be affected, therefore, by the law that forbid the marriage of a mother, a daughter, or a sister, for he had none; and yet the prohibition was extended to him by the blundering casuistry of the rabbins, as it may seem, even when these relations were doubly dissolved, and the mother, the daughter, or the sister, was a proselyte of justice, as well as himself.

XX.

AFTER saying thus much of ecclesiastical and civil laws, that forbid what the laws of nature permit, something must be said of those

* SED. De jure, &c, Lib. v.

which permit, or enjoin, what the laws of nature forbid, such things as are in direct opposition not only to reasonable nature, but to physical instinct. Sodomy was permitted among several nations, and if we dare not say that the moral Socrates practised it, we may say that the divine PLATO recommended it, in some of his juvenile verses at least: and yet sodomy is very inconsistent with the intention of nature, which can be carried on by the conjunction of the two sexes only. Of bestiality I say nothing, because I do not remember any proof that it was used by any people except the Israelites, who must have been very prone to this unnatural crime, since so great severity of law was necessary to restrain them from it. Castration and celibacy may be cited on this occasion. They are both contradictions to the law of nature; the first wantonly permitted, the second deceitfully and ambitiously commanded. The first makes obedience to the law impracticable for two the most filly purposes imaginable, to provide guards for the seraglios of the east, and singers for the theatres of the west. The second came into fashion early in the christian church, to speak of no other, under the pretence of greater purity; and was pleaded for, and practised by, orthodox enthusiasts, as well as by heretics. But when the church, with the bishop of Rome at the head of it, made a bold and successful push to be every where superior to the state, the celibacy of priests became a coercive law. GREGORY the seventh made the whole clergy submit to it, and the council of Trent maintained

it strenuously for the same reason of ecclesiastical ambition, that the religious society might be every where more independent on the civil, and less attached, by the ties of nature, as well as of law, to the state.

THERE are other examples of the same kind, which cannot be brought without the utmost horror; because in them it is supposed impiously, against principles as self-evident as any of those necessary truths which are such of all knowledge, that the Supreme Being commands by one law what he forbids by another. The zealots among the Jews assumed a right to assassinate any Jew, or any other man, who should seem to them to violate by public and strong appearances, “ *speciebus aliquot facti atrocioribus **,” the sanctity of the Divinity, of the temple, or of the nation †. Thus MATTATHIAS, in the fury of his holy zeal, rushed on the Jew who was about to sacrifice in obedience to the edict of ANTIOCHUS ‡, and on the officer appointed to take care of the execution of the edict, and murdered them both. In this case the appearances were not equivocal, most certainly. In many they might be so, and were so most probably very often, as in that for instance of a priest who was supposed to perform his office without a due purification ||, and who might be dragged out of the temple on this presumption by

* SELD. *De jure, &c.* l. iv. c. 4,

† *Sanctitatem sive numinis, sive templi, sive gentis.* Ibid.

‡ *Maccab. Joseph.* || in immundicie sua.

the young priests; too young to be employed in any other sacerdotal function, but to whom it was lawful to dash out his brains with their clubs. In all cases it was against the very essence, as well as forms, of justice, to trust in any hands a power which none but enthusiasts would exercise. This strange power, however, was founded on their traditional or oral law; and the example of PHINEAS, who murdered ZIMRI and COZBI in the act of fornication *, and the approbation which God is said to have given to this action, were brought to authorise the zealots in a practice, which produced such scenes of horror among the Jews, even whilst they were besieged by a common enemy, as no other nation ever exhibited: such scenes as lions and tigers, provoked by hunger, and let loose together, would hardly have afforded.

IF we take for granted all that we find related, and as it stands related, in the books of the Old Testament; we must believe that the all perfect Being approved, and commanded on many particular occasions, the most abominable violations of the general laws of nature, which were his own at least as certainly, as any of those that could be given by immediate revelation, and more certainly than any of those which were assumed on the authority of Moses, or on any authority afterwards to be so given. Now this we cannot believe as theists; nor are we, I think, under any obligation of believing it as Jews, and much less as Christians.

* Num. c. xxv.

As theists we cannot believe the all-perfect Being liable to one of the greatest of human imperfections, liable to contradict himself. Nothing is more conformable to our idea of such a Being, than to believe that human reason cannot account for the proceedings of infinite wisdom in a multitude of instances, in many of those perhaps which seem the most obvious to it. But nothing is, at the same time, more inconsistent with this idea, than to believe that this Being perplexes his laws with apparent contradictions, or deviates from them, like human legislators, in the particular applications of them ; and that God, who never acts against the perfections of his own nature, commands his creatures to act upon any occasion against the perfection of theirs. If we try the whole system of the religion and policy of the Jews by this rule, I apprehend that all the sophism which has been, or can be employed, with the help of beggling the question throughout, will not be sufficient to acquit this system, in many cases, at the tribunal of informed and unprejudiced reason. The theist, as a theist, can never admit that laws, which are inconsistent with that reason, and process of reasoning, by which he discovers, and can alone discover, the existence and the will, relatively to man, of an all-perfect Being, were given at any time, or to any people, by this Being. He will never give up one for the sake of the other ; nor renounce demonstration in the highest degree for probability in the highest, and much less in the lowest. All such laws, therefore, as are manifest

lest violation of the laws of his nature, will be ascribed by him to man, not to God.

A LARGE field of particulars opens itself. Let us confine ourselves to that on which we have touched already. One law of nature forbids murder, as well as one law of the decalogue. Another allows it as far as it is necessary to self-defence, and to the preservation of society, that is, to the maintenance of the whole system of natural law. It will not be pretended, I suppose, that these two laws contradict one another. They coincide in the same plan. The general and the particular law tend to the same purpose: they shew the wisdom of the legislator by their consistency, and his goodness by their universality. It cannot be pretended with any appearance of truth, I am sure, that the same may be said of the mosaical laws about murder. The whole system of the law of MOSES, like the whole system of his conduct, was founded on murder: and the exceptions which he made, by particular laws in favor of it, to the general law against it, were so numerous, as to make this in great measure vain; which may be thought, without absurdity, not to be one mark of his divine legation. The thirteenth chapter of Deuteronomy might find it's place here; and many singular reflections might be made concerning the precautions taken against false prophets, whose seductions could be of little force in opposition to a true prophet; and against dreamers of dreams, that could have little force in opposition

to daily and almost hourly miracles, wrought in the sight of all Israel. Others might be made on certain precepts, from which I will suppose, candidly, that the inquisition established in your church has copied the instructions she gives to her familiars ; and others again on a spirit of cruelty, that involves the innocent with the guilty, spares neither man, woman, nor beast, neither the brother, the son, the daughter, the wife, nor the friend ; but makes of the whole chapter such an edict, as could not be imputed to ATTILA, without doing injustice to the uncircumcised, as well as unchristian, king of the Huns. Such observations, I say, might be made, and be pushed to conviction ; to inward conviction I mean : for there are those that will not own it when they feel it, but have recourse rather to trifling distinctions and dogmatical affirmation, the last entrenchments of obstinacy. In these let us leave them. Let it avail as much, as it can avail, to say that the laws referred to, and written in blood, like those of DRACO, were given to the Israelites alone ; that the Israelites were God's people exclusively of all others ; that he was their king by a particular covenant, as well as their God ; that idolatry was in every Israelite a breach of this covenant, an act of high treason, a political crime, and fit to be punished as such ; in a word, that on all these accounts God might give them such laws in the former relation, as he could not have given to them, nor to any other people, in the latter alone, without contradicting, and obliging those who obeyed

obeyed them to contradict, the general law of nature, whereof he was the author, and by which the punishment of individuals in terrorem, according to their several degrees of guilt, not the undistinguishing extermination of collective bodies, and especially for matters of opinion, is allowed. I have met with arguments of this sort employed to justify the mosaical law. They will not be admitted by some, perhaps, because Moses made use of the same cruel and undiscerning jurisprudence, on account of their idolatry, against the Canaanites, who had no such covenant with God, nor were the subjects of such a theocracy ; who were obnoxious to divine vengeance in no other respect, than that which was common to them and all the heathen nations ; and who had provoked the Israelites by no other injury than that of self-defence : that these laws were therefore in the mouth of Moses, and in the understanding of all the people, the laws of God as God, and not merely as king. But whatever be determined, the example is to my purpose. He who can persuade himself that God, as king of a particular people, whom, as God, he had separated from the rest of mankind, gave these laws to the Israelites, must still confess that these laws are repugnant to those of nature ; which will leave the difficulty much where he found it. He, who, instead of resting on this distinction, confounds the king and the God together, as Moses and the Israelites certainly did, is reduced to the necessity of owning, what no sincere and consistent theist

theist can own, that the Supreme Being contradicted his own laws in this instance. A sincere and consistent theist, then, must look on the thirteenth chapter of Deuteronomy as an example of human laws that command what the laws of nature forbid.

THAT neither the Jew, nor the Christian, is under any obligation to look on it otherwise, may be collected from hence. The Sadduces rejected the whole oral law, and all the traditions of the Pharisees: they rejected too, most probably, the whole written law, except the five books ascribed to MOSES, tho' this has been controverted: they denied the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the dead, and a state of future rewards and punishments, which they esteemed to be doctrines invented or adopted by the Pharisees, and which we may believe, on very good grounds, to have been introduced into the Jewish church at different times, as well as from different churches, wherein we know that they were taught, since there are no evident traces of these, but rather of the contrary, opinions in the mosaical system of religion. The Sadducees, therefore, opposed ~~on~~ all these points, not only the Pharisees first, but the doctrine of CHRIST, to whom few of them were converted, afterwards. The Sadducees, however, continued members of the Jewish church, and sacrificed at Jerusalem, whilst the Samaritans were driven out, or drove themselves out, and sacrificed on the mountain of Gerizaim: neither
do

do we find that the former were so obnoxious to the censure of CHRIST, as the Pharisees. But the Pharisees were still the orthodox, that is, the sect in fashion: and how much they multiplied the observances of the law by their traditions, and varied the sense of it by their interpretations of it, is enough known in general by every one. Now it seems very plain that a Jew, whether Sadducee or Pharisee, might have softened by different methods, agreeably to the principles of his sect, the abominable violations of the natural, by the mo- saical law. This too, one may believe, would have been done, if the cruel spirit of their law had not made them a nation of enthusiasts; and if long habits had not made the spilling of blood more familiar to them, than to most other people. The Sadducees were famous for their strict attachment to the rules of justice: and some are of opinion that they took their name from an hebrew word, signifying justice, rather than from SADOC the disciple of ANTIGONUS SOCHAEUS. Surely then a Jew, in the character of a Sadducee, might reject out of the pentateuch, with a due regard to natural justice, those unnatural, unjust, and bloody institutions, as reasonably, and as reconcileably with his judaism, as he rejected the whole oral law in opposition to the Pharisees, and all the other books of their scriptures in conformity to the Samaritans. A Jew, in the character of a Pharisee, might have reconciled, with still greater ease, the law of MOSES to the law of nature, that is, the assumed law of God to the real. A

third law, the oral, might have brought this about; and this would have been the very best use to which it was ever put. When I say this might have been done with still greater ease by interpretation, than by retrenchment, I do not speak without sufficient grounds: since I may undertake to shew, from SELDEN, BASNAGE, and other authors, who deal in the Talmud, and in talmudical writings of rabbins, which they render intelligible even to me, that it would cost less improbability of tradition, and less subtilty of sophism in commenting, than many other opinions did, which these men had the credit to establish. The latitude of interpretation according to various senses, and the authority of a cabala, were certain expedients by which the imputation might have been taken from the Supreme Being, or the severity and injustice have been softened and excused in MOSES. Nothing of this kind having been done, I conclude once more, that this chapter of Deuteronomy stands, and must stand, an example of human laws, that command what the laws of nature forbid.

LITTLE more consideration will be necessary to discover that a Christian, who professes a religion promulgated by God himself, and in every point conformable to the law of nature, is obliged to deny any precept, which is repugnant to this law, to come from God, let it come on what authority, or be assumed on what pretence soever. The proceedings of providence are represented, on one occasion particularly,

ticularly, by St. PAUL, to be merely arbitrary: and the presumption of those who should enquire into the reason of them, is very prudently reprobated before hand. How just the representation, or the reproof is, may be questioned, as the first of them has been, and as they both may be, the more reasonably, because these proceedings relate to God's dealings with men; for the justice of which we are told by divines that he appeals even to men. But this apostle himself does not, I think, prescribe any thing directly opposite to the law of nature, as the command of God to man; though his writings abound with mysterious refinements that favour strongly of the pharisaical school, and with the mirabilia and inopinata of the Portic, a school not unknown to the former.

IN all cases, and however this may be, the gospel of CHRIST is one continued lesson of the strictest morality, of justice, of benevolence, and of universal charity. He could have called for fire down from heaven, or for an army of destroying angels, to terrify those who did not believe, or to exterminate such as fell from the faith. But he breathed quite another spirit; and his instructions to his apostles went no further, than to preach, to exhort, to reprove; and, where they could not prevail to have their doctrine received, to shake off the dust of their feet. In cases of the most enormous crimes, and even of apostasy, the apostles exercised no other power than that of separating such sinners from the communion of the

the faithful. If it should be urged that they could exercise no other, because they were not chief magistrates, nor legislators in any civil society, as Moses was, and therefore that no argument ought to be drawn from what they did not do, to condemn what Moses did and commanded ; it would be urged in vain. They healed the lame; they cured the blind, and even raised the dead, to prove their mission. Moses proved his mission by miracles likewise. But the miracles wrought by them, in the mild and beneficent spirit of christianity, tended to the good of mankind ; whereas the miracles he wrought, in the fierce and cruel spirit of judaism, tended to the destruction of mankind. In this case, therefore, the difference was great ; but in the other, in that of keeping the Jews attached to their religion, and the Christians to theirs, the difference was total. Moses exercised, and commanded the exercise of, a political power, the most tyrannical, the most contrary to the laws of nature, and the most irreconcileable to every sentiment of humanity, for this purpose. The apostles, who might have exercised, for the same purpose, a divine, and a much greater, power, exercised no other than that which has been mentioned, which was not cruel, most certainly, and can be scarce called coercive; in the course of their ministry, how much occasion soever heresy, apostasy, and other flagrant crimes, in the churches they had planted, gave them for it. ELYMAS, indeed, was struck blind by St. PAUL ; and ANANIAS and SAPPHIRA fell dead at

the feet of St. PETER. But these were particular and extraordinary interpositions of providence. CHRIST gave no instruction for the exercise of such judgments in any case. He had reproved this kind of spirit in his disciples, when he was among them: and as long as his spirit remained in his church, the mosaical spirit, as opposite to his law, as to the law of nature, could not arise.. When they, who called themselves the successors of his apostles, hearkened to the suggestions of their passions, and called them zeal ; that is, when political, rather than religious, motives guided them ; they imitated MOSES, outdo him they could not : and, besides persecuting to convert, they not only promoted the utmost severity of punishment against those who fell back into idolatry or judaism, or who embraced any heresy ; but, like MOSES, they pretended to do all this by the command of God : so that the church of CHRIST imitated, in this instance, as it did in many more when it was fallen into corruption, and not before, such institutions as the church and state of the Jews adopted in the primitive purity, such as that purity was, of their original establishment.

UPON the whole matter, a christian, who takes his religion from the gospel, and not from systems of theology, far from being under any obligation of believing, is under the strongest of rejecting, every law, whether perpetual or occasional, whether given to the Jews alone or to them and to others, that is evidently repugnant to the law of nature.

nature and of right reason, to the precepts of the gospel, to the example of CHRIST, to the practice of his first disciples, and to the genuine spirit of the religion they taught. If this was the spirit of God in the days of CHRIST, it was the spirit of God in the days of MOSES: and whatever difference there might be in the several dispensations, and the objects of them, God could have effected his purposes without contradicting his spirit. We may believe any thing sooner than this, that immutability admits of change; and yet we must admit both the contradiction and the change, if we give entire credit to all that we find related, and as it stands related, in the books of the Old Testament.

XXI.

I HAVE quoted from father SIMON, in one of my Letters * to my lord CORNBURY, a divine of the faculty of Paris, who held that the authenticity of these books, and divine inspiration of their authors, should be understood to extend no further than to matters purely of doctrine, or to such as have a necessary connection with these. Upon the same, and even a stronger, principle of reason, we may assert that as the sacred writers have no claim to inspiration when they write on other subjects, so neither have they when they write any thing on these which is evidently inconsistent with right reason, in matters that are proper objects of reason, and with the first principles

* Let. III.

of natural law, which are at the same time the first principles of christianity. What the french divine advanced, and what I have advanced here, will be treated as an impious paradox by some of those trifling solemn dogmatists in criticism and theology, who have advanced so many absurd and impious, really impious, paradoxes of their own. But let us see, in the present case, on whose side the paradox and the impiety lie. I say that the law of nature is the law of God. Of this I have the same demonstrative knowledge, that I have of the existence of God, the all-perfect Being. I say that the all-perfect Being cannot contradict himself; that he would contradict himself if the laws contained in the thirteenth chapter of Deuteronomy, to mention no others here, were his laws, since they contradict those of nature; and therefore that they are not his laws. Of all this I have as certain, as intuitive, knowledge, as I have that two and two are equal to four, or that the whole is bigger than a part. From these indisputable premises I conclude that all those expressions in the text, which ascribe these laws to God, are uninspired, perhaps interpolated, but undoubtedly false. What now does the dogmatist do? He begs the question, and he pretends to demonstrate. His premises are precarious, and his conclusion is a paradox. He imputes, directly, to the author of nature, what he is forced to own unjust and cruel according to the laws of nature; and he pretends to justify the all-perfect Being, whom he has thus accused, by inconclusive and sophistical arguments.

I HAVE

I HAVE touched this point above: but since I recollect that Mr. LOCKE has insisted on a solution of the difficulty, which I think, and am not afraid to call, inconclusive and sophistical, it is worth my while to bestow a few more words upon it. There is a respect due even to the mistakes of that great man, the respect I mean of giving* a reason for not submitting to his authority, which I would not pay to every dull commentator, nor frothy disclaimer, that should argue like him, or from him. We know, from some of his writings, how easily he received every hypothesis that favored, or that seemed to favor, the authenticity of the Jewish scriptures, notwithstanding all he said in his chapter of probability; and Mr. COSTE, the translator of his famous Essay, who knew him well, accounted for this, and some other contradictions, by a strange timidity of temper, which made him often waver in his own abstract philosophical notions, when he came to apply them to any of his religious prejudices. He believed, on very insufficient authority, that the one true God, was known to the Jews alone, and that the rest of mankind were polytheists and idolaters from the beginning. Thus he might receive too some other theological assumptions: this, for instance, as presumptuous and impertinent as it is, to assign the sufficient reason that infinite wisdom had for doing in one manner what infinite power might have done in several, " that it was necessary God should separate a chosen people from the rest

“ of mankind, in order to preserve among man-
“ kind the knowledge of himself in his unity :”
or this, that “ the choice fell on the Israelites not
“ for their own merit,” since no nation upon
earth could have less towards God or man, but,
“ for the merit of their forefathers,” of ABRAHAM
famous in the east, the patriarch of the Arabians
as well as of the Jews, of ISAAC his son, and of
JACOB his grandson, of whom it is said in the
scriptures that they were preferred in the womb
to ISMAEL and to ESAU, without assigning any
apparent reason for this preference, since they could
have no personal merit so early ; and the reason of
which must have been therefore this, that the
Israelites were to descend from them ; which looks
as if the fathers were chosen for the sake of the
sons, rather than the sons for the sake of the fa-
thers. Mr. LOCKE, who could embrace such hy-
potheses as these, might easily assume, as he did
assume, that “ in order to keep up this separa-
“ tion, and to secure the effects of it, the Su-
“ preme Being submitted to be not only the tute-
“ lary deity of this people, as he had been of
“ their fathers, and to make a covenant with
“ them, but to be their local deity, and even
“ literally as much their king as their God.”

THAT he was such a king Mr. LOCKE af-
ferted : and on that assertion he distinguished be-
tween the mosaical, and all other laws, in his
Letter concerning Toleration. By the former,
idolaters were to be rooted out, he says : but the
former

former is not obligatory on Christians, and therefore urged by intolérants very absurdly in favor of persecution. The jewish commonwealth, different from all others, was an absolute theocracy ; no difference could be made between that commonwealth and the church ; religious laws were the civil laws of that people, and part of their political government, in which God himself was the legislator. The citizens, therefore, of that commonwealth, who apostatised, were proceeded against as traitors and rebels, guilty of no less than high treason. Let it be so. The objections of injustice and cruelty to these laws will remain in their full force, and be of more weight to prove them human, than all these hypotheses to prove them divine. God was king, and idolatry was no less than high treason ; no objection therefore can lie against the punishment of it. None certainly : but every objection to the manner, and degree, in which this punishment was to be inflicted, stands good ; for if we can believe God to have been a king, we can never believe him to have been such a king as he is described, nor to have given such laws as MOSES gave in his name. Is it not enough to reduce, in our notions, the Supreme Being to the state of an earthly monarch, unless we degrade the all-perfect Being, in them, to the character of an unjust and cruel tyrant, who authorised, and even commanded, his ministers expressly to punish without measure, without discernment, and without forms of justice ? Can it be obligatory on a Christian to believe this,

which Mr. LOCKE believed? Surely not; no more than to believe that it is obligatory on him at this day to punish heretics by virtue of these laws: which opinion Mr. LOCKE disclaimed, and against which he wrote this very treatise.

I NEED not take notice of the indulgence, which, Mr. LOCKE observes, to the honour of the mosaical law, was shewn by it to strangers. The observation is not strictly within my subject; for I never affirmed that all the laws of MOSES were repugnant to the law of nature. But what was this indulgence? Strangers were not compelled by force, and on pain of death, to embrace judaism, nor were the Israelites commanded to exterminate the Moabites, and other foreign nations, unless they renounced their idolatry. The task might have been too hard for the chosen people: and they did not want, at that time, any more land than that of the seven nations. If they had wanted more, they would have soon had a law to take it, and to exterminate the rightful possessors, as they had a promise, and a law which authorised them to conquer and destroy the Canaanites. Mr. LOCKE, indeed, adds another reason for this destruction. God had chosen Canaan for his kingdom, as well as the Israelites for his subjects, and he could not suffer the adoration of any other deity in his kingdom: though, in fact, other deities continued to be adored there, with or without the consent of his people. More reflections on the manner of stating facts, as well as

of arguing, may be made ; but these are more than enough to shew, in one instance more, and by the way, into how low a form the greatest writers fall, when they attempt to reconcile to common sense, or common honesty, many passages of traditions inconsistent with both. The Jews, or the penmen of these traditions, had so little of either, that they represent sometimes a patriarch like JACOB, and sometimes a saint like DAVID, by characters that can belong to none but the very worst of men. Can we be surprised, then, that they ascribed to the all-perfect Being, on various occasions, such a conduct, and such laws, as are inconsistent with his most obvious perfections ? Can we believe such a conduct, and such laws, to have been his, on the word of the proudest and the most lying nation of the world ?

MANY other considerations, some of which have been occasionally mentioned, in what I have writ to you, might have their place here. But I shall confine myself to one, which I do not remember to have seen, nor heard urged on one side, nor anticipated on the other. To shew, then, the more evidently how absurd, as well as impious, it is to ascribe these mosaical laws to God, let it be considered that neither the people of Israel, nor their legislator perhaps, knew any thing of another life, wherein the crimes committed in this life are to be punished ; although he might have learned this doctrine, which was not so much a secret doctrine as it may be presumed that the unity

unity of the supreme God was, among the Egyptians. Whether he had learned both, or either, or neither of them, in those schools, cannot be determined; but this may be advanced with assurance: if MOSES knew that crimes, and therefore idolatry, one of the greatest, were to be punished in another life, he deceived the people in the covenant they made by his intervention with God. If he did not know it, I say it with horror, the consequence, according to the hypothesis I oppose, must be, that God deceived both him and them. In either case, a covenant or bargain was made, wherein the conditions of obedience and disobedience were not fully, nor by consequence fairly, stated. The Israelites had better things to hope, and worse to fear, than those that were expressed in it: and their whole history seems to shew how much need they had of these additional motives, to restrain them from polytheism and idolatry, and to answer the assumed purposes of divine providence.

XXII.

THE rough draughts, that have been thrown upon these papers, may help to shew that there is such a thing as the law of nature, antecedent to all other laws, and to the establishment of civil society: that this law is the law of reason collected a posteriori from the actual constitution of things, by experience and observation: that as instinct, affections, passions, and self-love, that

that universal spring of the animal kind, are given to put us into action, so this law is given to guide and govern the human conduct: that, if this law did universally and constantly guide and govern it, mankind would reach the perfection of their nature, and be as happy as they are by this made capable of being; but that the culture of their reason, the improvement of their knowledge, and every thing that tends to the perfection of their nature, and the completion of their happiness, being left to their industry, and subjected to the accidents and vicissitudes of human affairs, some few remain in ignorance, many more fall into error, and the irrational prevails over the rational nature, in different degrees, in all of them: that the state of mankind is imperfect in proportion as the use that they make of their reason is so: that the will of God signified by the law of nature, and revealed in his works, a revelation that admits of no doubt, shews the road to human happiness to all mankind: that they are seduced out of it by false appearances, and that law, custom, and even religion, which should have kept them in it, confirm these appearances, and only serve to keep them out of it.

If it be difficult to shew the particular reasons that have contributed, in an immense variety of instances, to render the laws and customs of mankind so opposite to one another as they are, and so opposite, or so little conformable, to the law of nature and of right reason, which should have been the

the model, and must be made the criterion, of them all, it is easy enough to discover what has rendered the religions, that have arisen in the world, from the first ages of it, so opposite in many particular modes, so similar in many general principles, and all of them together so little conformable to natural religion.

THESE religions, instituted by human, under the mask of divine, authority, though they might be intended to restrain and reform mankind, to give stronger sanctions to the law of nature, and to be subservient to government, have served, in all ages, to very different purposes. They have promoted false conceptions of the deity, they have substituted superstition in the place of those real duties which we owe to God and man, they have added new occasions to those that subsisted before of enmity and strife ; and insociability has increased as they have flourished. Nay, the first principles of them have been laid in it, in direct opposition to the religion of nature and reason, the first principle of which is a sociability that flows from universal benevolence. We are obliged to except, out of the religions instituted by human authority, the jewish and the christian ; but we cannot except even these, as one of them was taught originally, as the other of them has been taught in the course of it, and as both of them have been practised, out of the religions that have served to the ill purposes here mentioned, to that principally of insociability. On the contrary, no religions have rendered the professors

feffors of them so insociable to other men, as those which have claimed truly, or falsely, to be immediate revelations of the Supreme Being, and have exacted an implicit faith as well as an implicit obedience. Insociability was from the first, and continues still, the great characteristic of judaism. So it was, and so it is of mahometism. So it was not of gospel-christianity, but so it is become of theological christianity; if I may be allowed to make a distinction which will justify itself abundantly in every instance of comparison.

THE wisdom, as well as the power, that appears in the whole construction, order, and harmony of the universe, must have carried, at all times, the same general conviction into the breast of every man who observed, and reflected on his own observations. BALBUS had therefore sufficient reason to say, in a good sense, what TULLY makes him him say, " he must want intelligence " himself who can believe that this stupendous ma- " chine was made and is preserved without intelli- " gence," that is, without a distinct and superior intelligence, not without intelligence of it's own; the intelligence of the maker, not that of the thing made; for this is such an absurdity as the refinements of philosophy alone could adopt, and as can be never reconciled to the judgment of common sense. " Caelestem ergo admirabilem ordi- " nem qui vacare mente putat, is ipse mentis " expers habendus est," may be understood indeed to signify this very absurdity in the mouth of a Stoic,

Stoic, and TULLY might mean to make BALBUS speak in character, for which reason the passage should never be quoted without any explanation, as it is continually, for an exposition of true theism. But if the sphere of POSIDONIUS had been sent to the Britons, or to the Scythians, in the days of BALBUS and TULLY; if the machine called, I know not why, the Orrery, was sent, in our days, to the Hottentots, or the Samojedes, these savages would smile at the stupidity of any of their brethren, if any so stupid should be found among savages, who could imagine such a machine to be the effect of chance, or to have contrived, and made itself. They would all conclude that it was the work of intelligence, and of greater skill than that which they employed to build their huts, or to shape their canoes. The most reasonable among them could not fail to see, in the unity of the design, the unity of the artificer. But the vulgar, who make themselves their own ideas, and their own manners, the measure of all things, might very easily conclude that the several parts of this machine were made, and the several motions of it were directed, by different intelligences. This opinion too might grow up to be general amongst them, and the most rational savages might be obliged to yield to the least rational; in advancing of which no more is assumed than what has happened in every age and country, even the most civilised, and the least ignorant. But none of these savages would be absurd enough to suppose, tho' philosophers such as the Stoicians have done

done little less, that the intelligence, which made every wheel of the machine to move, was in the wheel.

THE Romans, the Greeks, and, before them, all the learned nations of the east, were in this case. The vulgar acknowledged a multitude of divinities, to whom they ascribed every excellency, and every defect of their own nature; so that in worshipping them they worshipped in some sort themselves. Their wise men, who acknowledged the unity of a Supreme Being, and held these inferior divinities to be his creatures and ministers, made even this being after their own image. The lovers of ease made him an indolent being, and wholly unconcerned about human affairs. The proud, who thought every thing that related to man equally important, and equally an object worthy of the divine care, made him a busy trifling being. "MVR-MECIDES aliquis, minutorum opusculorum fabricator." They who converted, with profane timidity, a reverential awe into a superstitious fear of God, and made the existence of a Supreme Being, which ought to be the comfort, the terror of mankind, ran into one of these extremes: They either screened him from human sight by the interposition of mediating, interceding, atoning, beings: or, fierce and cruel themselves, they represented him hating without reason, revenging without provocation, and punishing without measure. The gay, the wanton, the luxurious, made gods and goddesses of the same characters; and

JUPITER himself, the father of gods and men, was liable to human passions, and partook of sensual pleasures. Thus the vulgar believed, and thus the priests encouraged; whilst the philosophers, overborne by the torrent of polytheism, suffered them to believe, in ages when true theism was reputed atheism. There were others again who had, besides that vanity which is common to all men, the particular vanity of believing themselves chosen objects of the care of heaven, distinguished by singular privileges, and predestinated to some glorious purpose or other. The Egyptians were the first of all men admitted to the sight of the gods, and to a communication with them, according to JAMBlichus: and we may see what notions had been instilled into the Romans, of grandeur and empire, to which they were designed by the gods, when we read the pompous answer that JUPITER makes to his daughter, in the first book of the Eneid. I waive any further instances of the same kind: that of the Israelites, the most extraordinary of any, is too well known to be mentioned.

IT is unnecessary too that I should enumerate, in this place, any of those metaphysical whimsies, concerning the divine and human nature, which philosophers broached, and brought into fashion; as the vulgar had brought, tho' they had not been alone to invent, all the false conceptions that prevailed about the deity. Much has been said already, and more will be said on that subject.

What

What is to my purpose to observe here is, that the systems of theology, which philosophers, priests, and the rabble of the world, conspired to frame, were systems of superstition; that they passed however for systems of religion, revealed some how or other; to somebody or other, sometimes by the Supreme Being himself, sometimes by any other divine person, and, therefore, always of more authority than such as human reason could collect from the appearances of things. This persuasion too made it quite unnecessary to employ human reason about so superfluous a work: and thus an immense crop of superstitions grew up, choaked the seeds of natural religion, and corrupted, in a great degree, both public and private morality. In short, reason has been always controlled, natural religion and natural law have been almost entirely superseded, in every society of men: and many instances might be produced to shew that this has happened most in those which have been esteemed the most civilised. This has been the effect of imagination and passion, necessary, but dangerous, parts of our composition, under the influence of particular prejudices, and the direction of private motives in matters of the most public concern. If the revelations had not been pretended only; if the same divine wisdom, that shews both the existence and the will of God in his works, had prescribed any particular form of worship to mankind, and had inspired the particular applications of his general laws; the system of religious and civil government would have been uniform in

the whole world, as well as conformable to nature, and reason; and the state of mankind would have arrived at human perfection. But it was not in the councils of the Most High, which it becomes us to adore and not to examine, that this should be so: and therefore all these systems of religions and laws being nothing more than human expedients, there is no room to wonder that they have not been more effectual to good purposes, nor that the state of mankind is such as we feel, and as we are apt to complain that it is.

XXIII.

WE may assure, from fact, that this has been the divine economy; and leave those men to assume from imagination what this economy has, or should have been, who have so much theological presumption. But whilst we leave them to imagine without fact, we must not suffer them to imagine against it. Nothing can be, I think, more true, than what has been advanced concerning the unnatural religions, laws, and customs established in the several societies of men: and yet it is not less true, that the tables of natural religion and law are hung up in the sight of all men. All may read them: and, tho error has prevailed, and will ever prevail in the bulk of mankind, against knowledge, more or less, and to some degree, because it is agreeable to the private interests of those who lead, and to the prejudices of those who are led, that it should; I do not believe that there ever was a time,

á time, when it could be said with truth that the law of nature was imperfectly known, or that it was an incomplete system of morality before the christian revelation: both of which propositions are roundly advanced by divines, tho manifestly false.

DR. CLARKE says, in his Evidences of natural and revealed religion, which are often dim, and often weak, that the heathen philosophers were never able to prove, and explain clearly and distinctly enough, to persons of all capacities, those things which they were the most fully certain of, and did in good measure understand; such as the obligations of virtue, and the will of God, in matters of morality. Now if it could be reconciled to common sense that they understood not fully, but in good measure only, such doctrines as they are said in the same sentence to have been fully certain of, there would be no occasion to wonder that they were unable to prove and explain them. But to pass this over, the reasons alledged to shew their inability in this respect, or that they understood these things in good measure only, are such as give, indeed, great occasion to wonder when they fall from the pen of so able a writer. Their discourses, he says, were rather speculative and learned, nice and subtle disputes, than practical and useful instructions: the bulk of mankind could not profit by the sublime doctrine of PLATO, for instance. Agreed. The difficulty then of discovering and explaining the will of God, in mat-

ters of morality, and the whole system of natural religion, arose merely from the method they took of discovering it to themselves, and of explaining it to others. That is, they did by this system the very thing which divines have done by that of christianity. Philosophers departed from the simplicity of nature, divines from that of the gospel. Had the former been content to collect the will of God, as far as it concerns the duty of man, from what they knew of themselves, of their fellow creatures, and of the constitution, physical and moral, of the world, they had neither bewildered themselves, nor grown unintelligible to others. But they could not be so content. Many of these antient, like their mimics, the modern, reasoners *a priori*, undertook to deduce the religion of human nature and of human reason, from principles that exist infinitely beyond them. They knew human nature; and from thence they might, by the help of human reason have taught very clearly what they understood very fully. They did both when they kept within these bounds: but when they went beyond them, they did neither. When they pretended to contemplate the nature and moral attributes of the Supreme Being, they were, indeed, as unqualified for it as bats are to behold the light of the sun. They puzzled the clearest, and confounded the most distinct, ideas, sometimes by metaphysical enthusiasm, and sometimes by political design; for when such mists are conjured up in the most serene parts of our intellectual system, it cannot be intended by men who are

are in their senses, one would think, to make us see better: and, therefore, I could never read the proposition, that we may easily know God, if we be not ignorant of ourselves, so absolutely advanced, nor that strange parallel between God and the soul of man, wherein Dr. BARROW confesses that he indulged his thoughts somewhat freely,* without being sorry to find them in the works of so respectable an author.

ANOTHER reason, brought by CLARKE, to shew how unable these philosophers were to prove and explain the obligations of natural religion is this: They were never able to frame to themselves any complete, regular, and consistent system or scheme of things. If by these words be meant, as it must be in this place, such a system or scheme of morality, the fact asserted is untrue, how excellently soever the eloquent LACTANTIUS may have set this matter forth, or the judicious JUSTIN may have supported our modern doctor. In contradiction to all three, we may affirm boldly, because truly, that there is no one moral virtue, which has not been taught, explained, and proved, by the heathen philosophers, both occasionally and purposelly. It is, therefore, particularly absurd in christian writers to say, as the author of the Evidences says, after his two guides, that these philosophers did, indeed, discover all the particular doctrines of true religion; but that no one of them made a scheme true in all it's parts, nor did any

* Vol. II. Serm. vii.

one collect the several truths scattered up and down in their writings. For, I ask, are all the truths of natural and revealed religion collected into one regular and complete system in any of the Gospels, or even of the Epistles? Did any one of the fathers of the church make an entire scheme of religion or morality true in all it's parts? Will any man have the front to deny that they all mingled some truth and some error? Did not this very LACTANTIUS, did not JUSTIN, do so? Did any one of the fathers collect the truths that concern all our moral obligations, separate them from the errors, and make a regular complete system of the whole? Will it be said that St. AMBROSE did? But St. AMBROSE was a poor imitator of TULLY. In short, all the heathen philosophers agreed that the practice of virtue was of necessary and indispensable obligation, and that the happiness of mankind depended on it in general and in particular. They all agreed likewise what was virtue, and what was vice: and if they had any disputes about the great principles of natural, Christians had the same about the great principles of revealed, religion. They had such in the days of JUSTIN and of LACTANTIUS: and that they continued to have them in our days, CLARKE himself has been a signal example.

It was neither natural theology, nor ethics, that perplexed natural religion. It was metaphysical theology. Antient, like modern; heathen, like christian, philosophers had indeed many trifling disputes about words, the Stoicks particularly; or about

about things so very plain, that nothing less than grecian acuteness could make them appear at all intricate. Such were those about the *summum bonum*, in which, it is said, there were two hundred and fourscore different opinions.* That there were so many may be doubted; but that they must have been extremely various is certain. The *summum bonum*, or the supreme good of man, as it was understood and taught by the heathen philosophers, and which Dr. CLARKE calls, not without a designed ambiguity, the final happiness of man, was a subject whereon every man had a right to pronounce for himself, and no man had a right to pronounce for another. These disputes were, therefore, very trifling. But they should not be so strongly objected, since it is easy to shew that christian divines, the schoolmen especially, have trifled as much on points relative to natural and revealed religion both, as ever the heathen did on points relative to the former. Of the christian trifles too we may say, what could not be said of the others, that they became serious: “ *hae nugae ad seria ducunt.*” They have divided the schools, and the schools have divided the world, with circumstances of rage and cruelty to be found among no other parties.

XXIV.

IF such disputes, as that which has been mentioned, were easy, or might be thought unnecessary, to be determined; disputes of another

* *VARRO, St. AUSTIN.*

kind arose when the heathen philosophers attempted, for they did attempt, to make a complete, regular, and consistent system or scheme of things, the want of which is objected to them. These attempts were pushed very far by pagan theists: but it must be confessed that they served only to shew that men are fitted to know a little of some few things, and the whole of nothing. These men found soon that no sufficient materials for such a system or scheme lay within the bounds of natural law, and natural theology. They had recourse, therefore, to metaphysical theology, which being a science of their own invention, it was easy for them to establish such principles in it, as they judged sufficient for their purpose. They proceeded, therefore, to reverse the whole order of reasoning in the search of truth, to reverse the pyramid; and, instead of rising up from a broad foundation of particulars, laid in knowledge, to the lofty and narrow pinnacle of all knowledge, the existence of one all-perfect Being, they affected preposterously to set this pinnacle on the ground, and to raise the pyramid without any foundations at all. They not only reasoned concerning the nature and attributes of God himself from mere imagination, but they gave him as many companions and ministers, gods, angels, demons, genii, as they thought fit. CLARKE says, and most of his brethren agree with him, that to reason in this manner, from the nature and attributes of God, is the very first and most necessary thing of all. His and their approbation

of the reasoning of pagan theists, in consequence of this first and most necessary thing of all, would not be quite so full; and indeed it may seem to have been introduced for ornament, rather than for use, by those who made the one Supreme Being, according to the nature and attributes they give him, so immediately active in human affairs. But the pagan theists declined no help; and the service their gods, and other inferior beings were of, in accounting for the creation and government of the world, is known to every man who has been conversant in their writings, in those of PLATO particularly. When they wanted to account for the origin of evil, ditheism was invented; when they wanted to account for the supposed unjust distribution of good and evil, the “*mythologia de inferis*,”

BUT to be more particular. CLARKE observes that bare reason cannot discover in what manner, and with what kind of external service, God will be worshipped. He might have added, that bare reason cannot discover how any external service, that man can pay, should be acceptable to the supreme and all-perfect Being, except a compliance in all our words and actions with his known will, revealed in his works, an inward adoration of his unknown nature, a gratitude for benefits, and an entire resignation to his providence. The heathens knew that all the duties of natural religion are contained under these heads, but that the divine will concerning any external service, with which God would

would be worshipped, had been signified relatively to none of these duties. They might, therefore, as the best and wisest of them did, approve the political institutions of an external service, as political institutions, and as far as they helped to keep up a lively sense of these duties in the minds of men, and to promote the practice of them. But they, who presumed to reason boldly about the nature and attributes of God, were not so content. They represented the one Supreme Being, to themselves and others, under as many different characters as they represented their different gods. The most general representation of him, because it was thought the most proper to intimidate mankind, and to answer the ends of government, or because it was that which natural and superstitious fear could the most easily frame, was framed under the image of an absolute tyrannical monarch. From such notions these reasoners *a priori* deduced all those, whereby they took men out of the relation of creatures to their creator, and placed them in that of slaves to their tyrant. From hence those numberless, ridiculous, and cruel rites of paganism, which were held as necessary to obtain the favor, and to avert the anger, of heaven, as the strictest observation of morality; nay more necessary, if we may judge, as we may most reasonably, of antient by modern, and of pagan by christian, theology.

OBEDIENCE to the law of nature is our first duty, and our greatest interest: the happiness of our whole

whole kind, wherein every individual is included, depends on it. Obedience carries it's reward, disobedience it's punishment, along with it in the general system: and God has not made particular systems, nor established particular providences, for particular nations, much less for particular men, as far as we can discover by the help of reason and experience. The same causes produce the same effects every where, with some little variety of circumstances; and as the precepts of the law are common to all men, so are the sanctions of it. In short, as all men sin against the order of nature more or less, so the imperfect state of mankind shews that they suffer more or less by the uniform course of it. But neither reason nor experience will shew us, in the author of nature, an angry revengeful judge, or a bloody executioner. Neither reason nor experience will lead us to inquire what propitiation God will accept, nor in what manner a reconciliation between the Supreme Being and this worm man is to be made *. Natural reason does not stop here, nor expect with impatience the aid of some particular revelation. She stops much sooner. Repentance, as it implies amendment, is one of her doctrines, a necessary consequence of her principles, and she does not so much as suspect that any further revelation is wanting to establish it. But the reasoners *a priori* did, on false principles, in this case, and in many others, what an unreasoning vulgar had done through

* CLARKE in his *Evid.*

ignorance,

ignorance, and without any principles at all, except those of superstition. They took off from the real perfections of the Supreme Being, and they added imaginary excellencies to the human nature: like PROCRUSTES, they stretched out humanity, and lopped off from divinity, with great metaphysical pains, as much as they could: and when they found that one of these lines was still too short, and the other still too long, to answer their purpose of making them nearly commensurate, they spun a thread out of imagination, to lengthen the shortest.

ON such notions of the divine and human nature, egyptian, chaldean, magian, and almost all the theists of antiquity, founded their theology: on the authority of which they instituted various forms of worship, and promoted superstitious opinions by their attempts to discover the whole scheme and system of things; some of which infected even the fathers of our church in antient times, and would be avowed at this time by none but Rosicrucians, and fanatics as mad as them. In fine, this was the source from which so many religious ceremonies and observances, that had no direction to promote natural religion, though pretending to derive their institution from the author of it, arose. Sins were multiplied, and the terrors of superstitious minds increased. But even if these terrors had been rightly and solely applied to real crimes, not to sins of arbitrary discipline, they would have been of little effect, since the means of recon-

reconciling all sinners to an offended deity were made by this theology extremely easy. Strange means indeed they were, and such as cost the offender little. Such were expiatory sacrifices, wherein the blood of an innocent beast, or man, was shed to atone for the guilty person: as if God was appeased whenever the priests were glutted with roast meat, or as if it were indifferent to him whose blood was shed, provided his altars reeked with gore. This expiation was pushed to such a degree of pious inhumanity, that fathers made burnt offerings of their children to *Moloch*. I call it pious, because they who never offered up themselves seemed however to prove their repentance, as *ABRAHAM* was ready to prove his faith, much better by sacrificing their children, than a ram or an ox. They sacrificed what they held dearest next to themselves: and they might think that they had the example of the gods to authorise the practice, for *SANCHONIATHON*, it is said, related that *SATURN* had offered up his only son in the time of a plague. “*Coelo patri in holocau-
“ stum obtulit.*”

THIS was one effect of theological ingraftments on natural religion. The Supreme Being was represented so vindictive and cruel, that nothing less than acts of the utmost cruelty could appease his anger, and that his priests were so many butchers of men and other animals. Another ingraftment of the same kind was deduced from a very contrary notion, from a notion that God was

constantly attentive to the affairs of men, to the least, and to the most important alike ; that he entered into the closest familiarity with some, and gave audience at all times to all. Astonishing instances of this sort, as well as of the former, might be cited ; for the same theology, which represented the all-perfect Being rigorous and severe, without any regard to his mercy, or even to his justice ; represented him, with most theological inconsistency, on other occasions gracious, conversable, affable, without any regard to his majesty, or to the infinite superiority of his nature. But these instances are so easily found, and they are so shocking to every sincere theist who frames the most elevated, and therefore the least unworthy, sentiments he is able of God, that I am willing to save myself and you the trouble of reflecting on them. “ Ita “ tetra sunt, ut ea fugiat et reformidet oratio.”* How should they be otherwise, when ignorance and superstition were first to produce them, and when the eternal unalterable reason of things, the knowledge of which is claimed by men who approve some of the most detestable of these instances, and who produce others of their own growth, but upon the same principles, is for the most part nothing else than the reason of party, of prejudice, of profession, and of authority ? Let me, therefore, mention one alone. It shall be one that is common to all religions, and that carries with it, in general practice, more matter of ridicule, than of horror. The instance, I mean, is prayer ; or,

* Cic. Tusc. disp.

to speak more properly, the abuse of prayer. To keep up a due sense of our dependance on God, for which purpose this institution may be a very useful, and, consequently a very rational, expedient, is the duty of every man. But then it must be practised in a manner reconcileable to other duties of religion; in the first place, to an awful reverence, which consists in the inward sentiment wholly, and so little in outward demonstrations, that when these are carried too far they become a ludicrous pageantry of devotion, and serve rather to destroy it in most minds, than to maintain it in any; to an absolute resignation in the next place, one act of which is preferable to ten thousand collects. Men are fond of access to the Supreme Being. Nothing can flatter humanity so much. As soon, therefore, as they are taught that they may have it, not only by their proxies, the priests, but by themselves immediately, they use it familiarly and impertinently. They put up contradictory petitions to heaven in all the churches of the world. Some would be hurtful to themselves if they were granted, and almost all would be so to others. If the true God could be importuned, as LUCIAN represents JUPITER, he would be importuned to change at every moment the dispositions of his infinite wisdom, and to accommodate the whole economy of his providence in a manner that implies often contradiction, to different and opposite interests, nay to the different and opposite caprices, not of nations alone, but of particular men, women, and children.

SINCE I have mentioned this part of divine worship, among other external services, it may be proper to take notice of the Second Alcibiades which Dr. CLARKE quotes, and which will serve, if I mistake not, my purpose better than his. In that dialogue, SOCRATES insists on the danger of addressing particular petitions to the gods, lest we should ask what is evil in itself, or what may prove so in the event. He recites the prayer of some ancient poet, which is little else than a short act of resignation. He commends the Lacedemonians for addressing themselves in much the same style to the gods, when they asked in general “ pulchra “ cum bonis.” He mentions the preference given by the oracle of JUPITER HAMMON to the prayers of the Lacedemonians over those of the Athenians, and the rest of the Greeks. The authority of HOMER is brought, as PLATO, PLUTARCH, and generally the antient writers are apt to alledge it on all occasions very impertinently, to prove that the gods are prone to be angry, and to bear hatred even to whole nations. But SOCRATES concludes very rationally, that if they are so, they are not to be bribed by sacrifices, by offerings, and by external services; and that they regard the purity of the heart alone. SOCRATES thought that human errors about the will of God, and the duty of man, proceeded from pride more than ignorance, and therefore advised ALCIBIADES, of the purity of whose heart he had no very good opinion, “ since he would not make use of the gene-
ral

WHETHER it be as difficult, as CLARKE imagined, to suppose that SOCRATES meant himself in this passage, I examine not. Let it be that he meant the demon of ALCIBIADES. Since the master had an attending demon who dissuaded and restrained him when that was necessary, the scholar might have one who would inform, and determine him whenever that should be necessary. Nay more. Let it be, as some learned men* have observed, that PLATO began to write immediately after the three last prophets of the Jews, as if God had raised up him to supply their place. Let them cite, in favour of this opinion, another passage, wherein this philosopher says " that if a " perfectly just man should appear in the world, " he would be imprisoned, buffeted, whipped, " and crucified : which must needs have been a " prophecy of CHRIST, because CHRIST was whip- " ped and crucified ; whereas SOCRATES only " drank the poison by which he was condemned.

DASIER.

“ to die.” Let the same learned men take this passage too, in the Second Alcibiades, if they please, for another prophecy of the coming of CHRIST, and of a divine revelation, since remote events, and a distant time are often signified by immediate events, and the present time, in prophetic language.

SUCH prophecies in PLATO will not be readily, nor generally admitted, I think; neither does CLARKE insist that they should. But it must be admitted that PLATO insinuates, in many places, the want, or the necessity, of a divine revelation to discover the external service God requires, and the expiation for sin, to give stronger assurances of the rewards and punishments that await men in another world, concerning which, however, he had received particular information by one who returned from thence on purpose, and to frame a system of the whole order of things, both in this world and the next, that is, of the whole economy of God’s dispensations to man, and of his government in heaven and on earth.

XXV.

IT was on some of these subjects Socrates had discoursed, when SIMMIAS spoke to him in the manner quoted by CLARKE. He had owned that he did not expect to attain a full knowledge of these things, till the soul was separated from the body, and entirely purified in that other world, of which he

he gave so topographical a description. The conclusion was, "that, since they could not acquire a certain knowledge of the truth here, they should fix on the best and safest of human reasons, and venture on that bottom through the storms of life; unless they could get one still more firm, such as some divine revelation would be, to render their passage less dangerous." This is now the second of the proofs brought to shew "that the best, wisest, and least superstitious of the philosophers confessed their sense of the want of a divine revelation, and hoped for something of that nature." The proofs are pompously introduced; but the whole force of them amounts to no more than this, that SOCRATES, if in truth SOCRATES did say all that his scholar makes him say, was much in the wrong for not adding curiosity to pride, among the causes of human error concerning the will of God, and the duty of man: but SOCRATES himself had a great mind to know more than God has made his human creatures capable of knowing, and, therefore, more than he judged it necessary or useful for them to know. The imaginary want had, therefore; no other principle, than metaphysical curiosity. It could have no other. Nothing could be wanting to the divine purpose where God had given, tho he had limited, the means: How absurd, how trifling is it then to bring the opinion of philosophers concerning this want, and their hopes that it would be supplied, as a proof that the want was real, and that, after it had been long

complained of, it was supplied? I pass over another pretended proof of the same kind. PORPHYRY, whom it is impossible to see ranked among the least superstitious philosophers without surprise, found, it seems, that the universal method of delivering souls was not sufficiently known by philosophers.

In general, these men complained that sense reached but a little way in acquiring knowledge, that the human mind was weak, that the human life was short, and that the truth of things lay deep in darkness.* These complaints related to all parts of science, physical and metaphysical, to natural philosophy as well as natural theology: and I might, therefore, make the same use of them in one case, that CLARKE makes in the other. I might bring the imperfect knowledge of corporeal nature, and the sense philosophers had of this imperfection, in proof that some necessary knowledge of this kind was wanting, and that they had reason to hope the defect would be supplied sooner or later, somehow or other, in a natural or in a supernatural way. I might beg the question, like the doctor; and, having assumed that they were ignorant of many things necessary to the physical, as he assumes with much less reason that they were of many things necessary to the moral, advantages of life; I might argue that

* *Angustos sensus, imbecillos animos, brevia curricula vitae, in profundo veritatem esse demersam, omnia tenebris circumfusa esse.*

they had reason to expect a time would come, when men would be rendered able to discover not only the second, but the first qualities of substances, to reason from a general knowledge of essences, not from a particular knowledge of effects, and to frame by these and other extraordinary means a complete, regular, and consistent scheme or system of the whole economy of corporeal nature.

IN this manner I might represent the wants, the complaints, and the expectations of the heathen philosophers. Thus I might argue: and my representation and my argument would be extremely ridiculous. But are those of CLARKE less so? I think not. These philosophers, such of them, at least, whose works are come down to us, were very ignorant in physics. But in natural theology, and in morality, their knowledge was not deficient, though it was confined, in the former, to a very few general propositions. They had the same natural means of knowing that we have, and they knew, as well as we know, that "there is a first intelligent cause of all things, " that the infinite wisdom and power of this Being made and preserves the universe, and that "his providence governs it." They knew then, very fully, the relation in which they stood to this Being, the relation of dependent creatures and subjects: and this knowledge was sufficient, or none would be so, to enforce the laws he had given them; for the same means that discovered

§2 PHILOSOPHICAL WORKS.

the divine existence, discovered the divine will in the whole extent of our moral obligations. We might have expected that CLARKE would have specified some of these moral obligations which were unknown, or imperfectly known, to the philosophers, after all his insinuations concerning their ignorance. But, instead of doing this, he insists, in the very place where his subject required it, on such observances, such doctrines, and such speculations alone, as have been since indeed imposed by the christian revelation, but as cannot be reckoned necessary parts, nor, in truth, any parts, of the religion of nature and of reason. LACTANTIUS, whom he quotes so often, and whose suffrage is in this case of more weight, because his zeal for christianity was such, that he defended and taught it before he understood it, gives up the point. The philosophers, according to him, discovered the whole truth, and the whole secret of divine religion.* No doubt they did so: and the natural divine religion, which they discovered, is the foundation of the christian. There is no one moral precept in the whole gospel, as I have hinted already, which was not taught by heathen philosophers. Even those refinements upon virtue, to which our divines are willing to suppose that mere humanity could not reach, were taught by some heathen sages, and practised by some heathen saints, as well before, as after, the coming of CHRIST. Be-

* *Totam igitur veritatem, et omne divinae religionis argumentum philosophi attigerunt, Lib. vii.*

fore this time, their religion, that I mean of some of the philosophers, was much more spiritual than that of the Jews. After this time, it vied for spirituality, for mystery, and for supernatural effects, with the christian. To be humble, to renounce the pomps and vanities of the world, to mortify the flesh, to be patient under afflictions, to forgive injuries, to return good for evil, were particular doctrines of paganism, as universal charity or benevolence was the broad foundation of their moral system. This matter is strongly and largely exemplified in the third book of the *Alnetanae quaestiones*; for it served bishop HUET's argument in that place to shew what it served Dr. CLARKE's argument in his *Evidences* to conceal.

How trifling is it, after this, to insist on the disputes of a theological kind; for of a moral kind there were, properly speaking, none, that arose among the philosophers? They were disputes about words, or about some very insignificant speculations; and no more: for the morality of ZENO, and of EPICURUS, reduced to practice, was the same. But to proceed: how strongly might this objection be retorted on the fathers of the christian church? To object that the heathen had no one complete scheme wherein all the moral duties were collected together, instead of being taught occasionally, is ridiculous, since the same objection might be made, if it was one, to christianity likewise. But the divines

who object this mean something more. When they say that the philosophers were unable to comprehend the truth of religion, tho they discovered and explained almost all the particulars wherein it consists,* they mean by the entire scheme they refer to, the summary of their own theology, wherein the fall and the redemption of man, and all the mysteries of christianity are contained. This they call the whole doctrine, and design of true religion from the original to the consummation of all things: and of this indeed the heathen philosophers might well be ignorant, since no man could know it who was not taught by St: PAUL, or by some christian doctor.†

Thus their ignorance of true religion is accounted for not a little hypothetically. But even thus their complaints are not justified, nor the expectations imputed to them rendered reasonable. They must needs be ignorant of true religion, if natural religion was a part of it only, even at that time, as it is at this. They could not know a revealed religion, nor any real want of it, before the revelation was made: and the knowledge they had was such as the Author of nature had thought sufficient, since he had given them no more. Their complaints and their expectations, therefore, were founded in proud curiosity, and vain

* Quamvis ea fere, quibus summa ipsa constat, et viderint, et explicaverint. LACT. L. vii.

† Verum autem non nisi ejus scire est, qui sit doctus a Deo. Ib.

presumption. The use which CLARKE makes of them is something worse. To approve them, and to deduce from the supposed reasonableness of them the necessity of a further revelation, is to weigh his own opinion, and theirs, against providence. It is to say, that they saw before, and that he has seen since this further revelation was made, the necessity of it to reform mankind effectually, by opening to them the whole doctrine and design of true religion, which were opened in part only to the heathen world; and that the event has justified the complaints, and the expectation. This latter has been a topic of much theological triumph. "Bring me a man", says LACTANTIUS*, "who is choleric, who is given " to rail, who is unruly and fierce, with a few words " of God I will render him as tame as a sheep. " Bring me one who is given up to his lust," and so he goes on. " Numquis haec philosophorum " aut unquam praestitit, aut, praestare si velit, po- " test?" Did any one of the philosophers do so much, or could he, if he would? " It was hard," " says St. AUSTIN, where he mentions the letter of PORPHYRY to ANEBO, " it was hard for so great a " philosopher to discover, to expose, and boldly " to convict the whole diabolical society, which " every little old christian woman discovers at " once, and detests openly. *Quam quaelibet* " anicula christiana nec nosse cunctatur, et liber- " rime detestatur." Thus the triumph of the gospel over ignorance and immorality, and the

* Vid. the quotation in the Evid.

reformation of the world, by the publication of it, are frequently magnified. But when we consider the means of reforming mankind, which the heathen philosophers, and the christian divines, have had in their turns, and compare the progress made in this great work by both, it will appear that the former had not sufficient means (so far their complaints were well founded) nor the latter a success proportionable to the means they had. In short, if CLARKE's way of reasoning be good, some extraordinary and supernatural assistance to reform the world, is still wanting; for it would be impious to say that a further revelation is just as necessary now as it was before the coming of CHRIST,

XXVI.

TO speak of the want of sufficient means to propagate natural religion, distinctly from the want of a sufficient knowledge of it, which are often purposely confounded together, that the first, which is true, may cover the last which is false, must be our next task.

THERE was no creed, nor any act of uniformity, imposed on the heathen philosophers. But still it is not true that the system of moral obligations, or natural religion, was to them a wide sea wherein they wandered without knowing their way, or having any guide. It is not true that they were unable to make out upon what principles originally, and for what end ultimately, the choice

choice of virtue was to be made*. They had better guides than CLARKE, whom it was in their power to follow, nature and reason ; one pointed out their way with a steady hand, and the other was sufficient to lead them in it, the very purpose for which it was given. The original principles of this choice were strongly laid in the constitution of things : and these philosophers must have been stupid, as well as blind, if they had not felt, as well as seen, that the ultimate end of this choice was the happiness of mankind. They felt it, they saw it, they proved it to others. Virtue was not only recommended as wise, and reasonable, and fit to be chosen, but surely it was established by them to be of plain necessity, and indispensable obligation ; since it was taught to be the perfection of our nature, as well as the positive will of God ; and since the greatest part of them did their utmost to establish a belief of rewards and punishments in a future life, that they might allure to virtue, and deter from vice, the more effectually. But the generality of mankind continued in their evil habits, notwithstanding all these doctrines, and all the institutions contrived to enforce them. What promised to be effectual in speculation, proved ineffectual in practice. Vice was checked, but virtue did not prevail. The conquest was never complete.

SHALL we say that the reason of this was because the missionaries of natural religion, who set them-

* Vid. Evid. p. 176. 191.

felves

selves in earnest about this excellent work, were few *? But this reason will not hold: for how few soever they might be in general, they were numerous enough at particular times, in particular places; and yet even then and there we do not find that they made any proportionable progress, altho' they could not fail to do some good by their exhortations, instructions, and examples. SOCRATES, his scholars, and all the great men whom the academy produced, may be reckoned a number of missionaries sufficient to preach the duties of natural religion with full effect in such a city as Athens. SOCRATES set himself in good earnest, surely, about this excellent work. He went from street to street, and from one public place to another, as the apostles did some centuries afterwards in their dispersions. If he preached with the same simplicity, he preached with the same zeal. If he had not all the gifts of the Spirit, he had some of them, no doubt; for tho' he could not work miracles to prove the divinity of his mission, he died to prove the truth of his doctrine. What was the effect of all this? He made a great, he could not make a good, man of his favorite disciple ALCIBIADES; and tho' he rendered, or contributed to render, the schools of philosophy nurseries of religion, as well as of learning, which were always open, and always crowded, yet how small a progress was made in the athenian commonwealth towards the reformation of mankind? Missionaries

* Evid. p. 173.

were not wanting in this instance, and a greater number would not have had a greater effect.

SHALL we say that the reason of this was, because many of the philosophers were so vicious themselves, that they contradicted their precepts by their examples, “ut cum eorum vita mirabiliter pugnet oratio?” This reason will not hold neither, and I might be surprised at CLARKE for bringing it, if I did not consider him, like other polemical writers, accustomed to vend his arguments by tale rather than by weight, and ready to employ such as have a specious appearance, how weak soever they really are, in hopes that some of his readers may be caught by them. TULLY boasts in his second Tusculan, as he does in all his writings, the wonderful effects of philosophy: and those which he mentions are such as natural theology and moral philosophy can alone produce, “medetur animis, inanes solicitudines detrahit, “cupiditatibus liberat, pellit timores.” But philosophy cannot produce these, he says*, in all men alike, nor be of any great efficacy, unless she works on a suitable and proper nature: for which reason philosophers themselves, they who have taught, disputed, and writ on all these subjects, have been seldom influenced by them. Scarce here and there one is to be found who lives up to his own doctrines and rules of life. TULLY pursues

* Non idem potest apud omnes. Tum valet multum cum est idoneam complexa naturam.

his invective against the levity, vanity, inconsistency, avarice, and other vices of these men: and CLARKE imagined that this sketch of their characters would furnish an excellent reason the more, whereby to account for the little progress they made in reforming the world. But he should have been restrained from insisting on this argument, both by the reason of the thing, and by a regard to the order of which he was. If the vices of many among those, who were missionaries of morality in the heathen world, disappointed the common endeavours of all; how came it to pass that christianity made so great a progress afterwards? How can the clergy of your church, or of ours, pretend that they contribute now, or ever did contribute, to the reformation of mankind? No age, whereof we have any certain anecdotes, can be pointed out, wherein all the vices, that TULLY imputes to most of the heathen philosophers, did not prevail among most of the christian divines, with great circumstances of aggravation. They have had not only all the vices incident to human nature in common with other men, but they have had the particular vices of their order; for such there are, and such I shall have occasion to shew that there are. Read the entire passage, consult your memory, look round you, and then you shall tell me what you think of CLARKE's argument. You shall tell it in my ear: I expect no more; for I know how desirous you are to keep fair with orders, whatever liberties you take with particular men. For my own part, who have not the same

discretion, I will say boldly that the clergy both of your church and of mine are, in general, the most negligent of missionaries, and fitter much to hinder by their example, than to promote by their doctrine, the advancement of religion, natural or revealed.

SHALL we say that the sublime doctrines, and abstract arguments of PLATO, and other philosophers, were by no means fitted for the bulk and common sort of mankind ? Or shall we fix the reason of the little progress they made, in their ignorance of the whole scheme, order, and state of things ? Should we do both, like the author of the Evidences, we should, like him, contradict ourselves ; because, if the doctrines of PLATO, for instance, were too sublime, and his arguments too abstract, they must have been much more so had he known, and gone about to explain all that is called the whole scheme, order, and state of things. It is marvellous to consider how many of the most refined precepts of christian morality were taught by him, several centuries before CHRIST and his apostles taught them. Such were those about imitating God, and others that have been mentioned above. It is still more marvellous to consider that some of the most profound mysteries of christianity were taught by this philosopher, several centuries before they were revealed. Such was the doctrine of the trinity ; in explaining which if he advanced some errors, he did no more than many christian divines have done from the most early

early ages of the church, no more than we are bound to believe that WHISTON and CLARKE himself have done, unless we renounce that orthodox profession of faith which all the fathers of the church have held, from those of the nicean council down to Dr. WATERLAND and my good uncle the earl of NOTTINGHAM. How this may be accounted for, I do not presume to determine, tho' I have somewhere or other presumed to guess. But this we may affirm, that, if PLATO had known the method of God's governing the world, his design in-creating mankind, the original dignity of human nature, the ground and circumstances of men's present corrupt condition, the manner of the divine interposition necessary to their recovery, and the glorious end to which God intended finally to conduct them *, as well as he knew the system of a trinity, of a future judgment, of an heaven, an hell, and a purgatory ; he, who is so often unintelligible now, would have been vastly more so. He would have been, therefore, less fitted than he was for the bulk and common sort of mankind, and for the great work of reformation.

SHALL we say, finally, that the heathen philosophers were unequal to this great work, because their doctrines were not enforced by a divine authority ? Even this reason will prove nothing ; for the philosophers and lawgivers did enforce their doctrines and laws by a divine authority, and call-

* Evid. p. 176.

an higher principle to the assistance of philosophy and bare reason. ZOROASTER, HOSTANES, the magi, the prophets and seers of Egypt, MINOS, PYTHAGORAS, NUMA, in short, all the fathers of heathen theology, all those who founded or reformed religions and commonwealths, made these pretensions: and their pretensions were admitted. They were impostors: but they passed, in vulgar opinion, for persons divinely inspired and commissioned. Some good they did, but little that was permanent, not because they wanted the opinion of a divine authority for them, but because they employed it absurdly, or because even this opinion was not sufficient.

To what now are we reduced? Since the precepts and motives, offered by the best philosophers, have been never able to reform mankind effectually,* without the assistance of some higher principle, and some divine authority, nor even when both of these have been assumed, may we not be led to think that such a reformation is impracticable? May we not conclude, from the experience of all ages, that no means can bring it about, and those which have been employed less than any? There is a perpetual conflict in the breast of every man, who endeavours to restrain his appetites, to govern his passions, and to make reason, as TULLY expresses it, the law of his life†. Just such a conflict there is between virtue and vice, in the great commonwealth of mankind. If the

* Evid. p. 198.

† Tusc. quæst. ib.

conflict was not maintained by religious and civil institutions, the human state would be intolerable : and tho' it be maintained, as the success is various, the state is very imperfect. The method taken to fix this success on the right side, by calling in artificial theology, has contributed more to subdue reason than vice and immorality. Reason has been laid aside, natural religion has been no longer solely, nor so much as directly, concerned in the contest. Authority has usurped the place of one, superstition of the other : and these two have been opposed almost alone to the torrent of human passions, and to the disorders of mankind, in all the countries of the world ; so that, wherever philosophy and reason could lift up their heads, they have had the remedy to combat as well as the disease.

XXVII.

THERE is a country, into the antiquities of which we look further back than into those of any other, and where we may find examples to confirm and illustrate what is here said, by comparing the effects of natural religion, unmixed and uncorrupted, with those of artificial theology and superstition. The country, I mean, is China, whose traditions and histories deserve, at least, as much credit as those of antient nations that have been known to us longer, and which our scholars quote with so much assurance. Now natural religion seems to have been preserved more pure and unmixed in this country, than in any other ; and for

a longer time from that when it was first inhabited, and government was first established in it.* The antient Chinese held it unlawful to dispute about the divine nature, about the attributes of God, the exercise of his power, or the conduct of his providence: and it seems very plain that the concise manner, in which their sages expressed themselves whenever they spoke of the Supreme Being, and upon which their refining successors have endeavoured to found, in part at least, their atheism, proceeded from this modest, this reasonable, and this pious principle. They observed the order of nature, and from thence they deduced all the rules of private morality and public policy. To compare his conduct with the law of heaven and earth,† is the character of a perfect prince, in the works of CONFUCIUS. 'That reason should preside over passion, was the great rule of life, and to walk according to it, was to walk in the great high way of life‡. Thus they were led, by simple and plain reasonings, from the works to the will of God, and to three kinds of moral obligations, to those of an individual, of the member of a family, and of the member of a political society. Bare reason enforced so well the practice of natural religion, by the laws and constitutions of this empire, and the duties of it became so habitual by education and custom, that this people enjoyed, under their two

* Scient. Sinica:

† Confert res a se gestas cum coeli terraeque lege.

‡ Orbis universalis regula, regia humani generis via,

first imperial families, which continued eleven hundred years, all the blessings of public and private virtue that humanity is capable of enjoying. So we must understand the descriptions of this golden age: for tho' the Chinese lived in a state of innocence and simplicity whilst it lasted, yet as they were subject, like other nations, to physical evils, so may we assure ourselves that they were neither infallible nor impeccable, nor therefore entirely exempt from moral evil. It is enough for the honour of reason, and of natural religion, that these principles, enforced by civil authority, appear in this instance to have answered the purposes of true religion much better by themselves, than these purposes have been ever answered by all the expedients, and all the adventitious helps, that philosophers, legislators, and priests have devised.

WHETHER any other nation afforded an example of the same kind, we know not. But this we know, that when other nations begin to appear, they appear already under the influence of absurd theology and gross superstition; and that the Chinese began in the same remote antiquity to fall into the same errors, and all the consequences of them. Under their third imperial family, the affection of imagining and unfolding mysteries, and of explaining the first principles of all things, grew into fashion amongst them: and the table of FOHI, or the book Yekim, which is nothing more than a draught of sixty four figures, composed of three hundred and eighty four lines, some broken, and

and some entire, furnished to the studious labors of VENVAM and CHEUCUM, and other commentators, as much sublime knowledge as ever the first chapter of Genesis furnished to a profound cabalist or whimsical divine. From the various changes, and different combinations, of these lines, they proceeded, as PYTHAGORAS did from numbers, and PLATO from immaterial forms and incorporeal essences, to erect systems of natural and moral philosophy. When they had once departed from simplicity and truth, in the search of mystery, they soon imagined themselves capable of attaining unattainable knowledge: the most chimerical passed for real, and they boasted of nothing less than to explain the whole scheme, order, and state of things. Thus reason was abused by pretended science, and natural religion was deformed by metaphysical speculations, and superstitious devotions.

LI LAO KIUM was a philosopher of the same age with CONFUCIUS, and both of them of the same with PYTHAGORAS. Whether the Chinese and the Samian had the same masters, I know not. But if they had, these masters were rather Indian gymnosophists, than Hebrew prophets. Several circumstances incline to think so; the dogma, particularly, in the Tao-su, where it is said that the first reason produced one, one two, two three, and three all things: a jargon very like to that of PYTHAGORAS which DIOGENES LAERTIUS has preserv'd, which he and LI LAO KIUM might

have learned in India, but which there is no pretence to suspect that the latter could have learned in Palestine. The Chinese taught the same moral philosophy that had been always taught in China, but he took advantage of the metaphysical folly which prevailed at that time, and which even CONFUCIUS had countenanced, to broach a new and a most extravagant theology. He founded it, perhaps, on some interpretations of the book Yekim: but however he founded it, he established it with so much success that he himself was worshipped at last: temples and statues were erected to many of his sect, all that imposture could impose on credulity was imposed, natural theology was abominably corrupted, and a ridiculous external service took the place, in great measure, of real virtue and true devotion.

THIS sect prepared the way for another, which had prevailed in India near a thousand years before our christian aera, but was not introduced into China till sixty five years after it. This sect was that of FOE, who raised a spiritual empire in the east, that has equalled, if not exceeded, all others, under different forms and appellations, in extent and duration. FOE lived in a desert, under the care of four jogues, or gymnosophists, till he was thirty years old. Then he appeared in the world, assumed divinity, and declared himself to be the saviour of men, for whose sakes he had descended to be born, that he might recover them from their errors, expiate their sins, and lead them into

into the way of being happy hereafter: for he threatened future punishments to those who did not believe in him, nor submit to his doctrines. Voluminous legends of miracles wrought at his birth, and in the course of his life, were published by ten of his disciples. Well might they be voluminous, since his pretended mission lasted nine and forty years: and we may assure ourselves that attestations of them were not wanting, since the number of proselytes he made in that time was immense. They were divided in different classes. To believe implicitly, and to observe the rules of morality, were required from all; and the least credible austerities were practised by some, as they continue to be at this day.

Both these religions are still subsisting in China. What has been the effect of them? The antient laws and customs of the empire are inviolably kept, and good government is maintained by them, independently of these. But are the Chinese grown better men? No. They build monasteries for bonzes, they endow them richly, they adorn their pagods or temples, they prostrate themselves, they pray, they make their offerings, and they burn gilded paper in them; after which they rob or cheat without scruple, and indulge themselves in practices which natural religion abhors the most. There is something worse than this. The true principles of religion being removed, and these fantastic principles placed in lieu of them, the foundation of all religion is sapped at once. They

who cannot persuade themselves that the religion they see practised is a service fit to be paid to a Supreme Being, nor consequently required by any such being, slide easily from the belief that there is no religion, to the belief that there is no God. This happened in China, where the literati, or learned men, are in truth a sect of atheists, and theism seems to be the portion of the vulgar alone. Such has been, and is at this day, the effect of artificial theology and superstitious devotion in that country. The Jesuits, from whose relations, as from the best authority in this case, I have taken what I have said on the subject, pretend that FOE, or XACA himself, gave occasion to the atheism that has been since established, by declaring, before his death, to some of his disciples, his inward doctrine, which transpired afterwards. He confessed, they say, that he had concealed the truth under the veil of types, metaphors, and parables; that vacuity and inanition were the first principles of all things, beyond which nothing was to be sought, because nothing was to be found. What is meant by the terms that the Jesuits translate "vacuum et inane," I know not, nor is it worth our while to guess. Thus much is plain, the consequence of refining in matters of religion, beyond the obvious dictates of nature and reason, has been superstition, and enthusiasm, or atheism, not reformation of manners, in China.

XXVIII.

IF we return now to those countries, with which we are better acquainted, we shall find in them much the same course of things. We shall find, indeed natural religion no where established in it's full extent and purity, as it seems to have been once in China. Some first principles of it were known and practised by people the least civilized, as JUSTIN * represents them to have been by the Scythians. No people were wholly ignorant of them, no sort of government could subsist without them. But then, as their light shone dimly, among these half savages, through the clouds of a superstition I somewhere called natural, and not improperly, we shall find this light actually obscured, and put out in great part, among the most civilized and learned nations. Instead of dispelling these clouds, and improving natural religion, they had increased by fantastic knowledge what ignorance had begun ; and we trace the same ill consequences of pretended revelations, and artificial theology, on this side the Ganges, as we have traced, on the other, the abominable consequences which have followed establishments made on the ruins of natural religion.

It is true that the heathen philosophers were unable to propagate natural religion, and to reform the manners of men effectually. But it is not true that they were so for the reasons CLARKE

* Lib. ii. c. 2.

gives, which have been shewn, I think, to be futile and insufficient. They were so for another reason principally, which has been touched, and requires to be more fully developed. The reason is, that they proceeded, in the doctor's own method, to lay the first principles of all religion, and to reason from them.

THE doctor, whom I cite so often because his book is the last I have read on this subject, and has been received with the greatest applause, repeats over and over, and very dogmatically, such maxims as these : " that goodness, and justice, and all the moral attributes are the same in God, as they are in our ideas ; that the relations, respects, and proportions of things are just such as they appear to be to our understandings ; that from hence there results a rule, which is the nature and reason of things ; that this rule is common to God and man ; that it is the law of all his actions in the government of the world ; and that, as it always determines his will, it should always determine ours." From this assumed knowledge of the divine attributes, and of the abstract nature and reason of things, the most extravagant opinions concerning the will of God, and the most audacious judgments on the conduct and dispensations of his providence, have been deduced. How should it be otherwise ? They who reason a posteriori from the constitution of the human system, and from the works of God, have indeed a rule to go by, precise, invariable, certain. But they who reason

reason a priori from the moral attributes of God, and from the abstract nature and reason of things, have no such rule. Theists will concur in ascribing all possible perfections to the Supreme Being: but they will always differ when they descend into any detail, and presume to be particular about them; as they always have differed in their notions of these perfections, and consequently in the application of them. I have said, I believe, already, and I shall not recal what is said, agreeably to universal and constant experience, that the eternal reason of things, founded in the consideration of their abstract nature, is, for the most part, as we see it employed by believers and infidels, by the orthodox and the heterodox, nothing better than the reason of party, of prejudice, of system, and of profession. Yet this is the method which some men prescribe, and which CLARKE * declares to be, of all others, the best and clearest, the certainest and most universal that the light of nature affords to discover the will of God in matters of morality, and to account for the dispensations and conduct of his providence. This author goes even further, and the other method is styled by him † a collateral consideration which may come in aid of the former, nothing more. This other method, however, extends as far as human wants require, and human knowledge can reach. Where it does not extend, the want is imaginary, and the knowledge fantastic: and if philosophers and divines had aimed at

* Evid. p. 119, † Ib,

establishing the belief of a Supreme Being, and the duties of natural religion alone, they might, and they would, have been contented with it.

BUT they meanted something more. They aimed at superiority and fame, at power and riches. He who had never presumed to define the moral attributes of an all-perfect Being, who contented himself to know that such a being existed by the necessity of his nature, and that his wisdom and power are infinite ; he who had never troubled himself about eternal respects, relations, and proportions of things, and collected the will, as he collected the existence, of this Being a posteriori ; he, I say, knew as much of God, and of his duty to God and man, as natural religion required that he should know. But it was for the interest of philosophers and priests, that men should think there was much more to be known ; and if those of Egypt had taught nothing more than natural theology, instead of theurgic magic, nothing more than the plain duties of religion, instead of mysterious rites ; it is highly probable the MERCURIES would not have been honoured, as they were, in all succeeding ages, nor the clergy have possessed a third part of the whole revenue of the kingdom.

SUCH as have been mentioned were the principles on which artificial theology arose among the heathens : and as the principles were laid neither in reason nor truth, which are always one, it

is no wonder that this theology became as various as error could make it. Some of the motives to invent and embrace it, were such likewise as have been mentioned. I say some ; because we may well conceive that when principles, not only false, but vague like these, had been once adopted by the delirium of metaphysics, the enthusiasm of superstition, or the prejudices of ignorance, the men who had been accustomed to reason upon them, and to take for true every thing that use had made familiar, might run into the greatest absurdities, sometimes without having any bad motive, nay with a pious intention of promoting true religion, and of attaching men to it by a greater authority, and by greater hopes and fears. This might be the case of many, as we shall easily believe if we consider what has passed in latter days. But however it was brought about, art took every where the place of nature, and faith of reason. Artificial theology spread far and wide ; philosophers taught it ; lawgivers established it ; priests improved it : here it was employed to enforce, there it was substituted to, natural religion : the main principles of it, and even particular opinions, and local institutions, have been variously mingled in different systems, and are to be discerned in them even now. This has happened naturally, and almost necessarily. All these systems lean on certain primitive notions, which the human mind is prone to frame or to receive. The same affections and passions maintain them, work upon them, and direct them in different imaginations.

tions. The matter is the same, the form alone is changed.

XXIX.

AMONG many doctrines, that were taught by those who pretended to explain the whole scheme and order of divine oeconomy with respect to man, that of rewards and punishments in a future state was one. It began to be taught long before we have any light into antiquity, and when we begin to have any, we find it established. How powerful is the desire of continuing to exist? How predominant is the pride of the human heart? Nothing seems more natural to man, than to wish to live without restraint or fear: and yet how ready was the multitude, in the pagan world, to embrace the hope of immortality, though it was accompanied with the fear of damnation? Like the elementary people of the cabalists*, one may think they would have chosen to be damned eternally rather, than to cease to exist. But every one was flattered by a system that raised him, in imagination, above corporeal nature; as every one was at liberty to flatter himself further that he should pass this immortality in the fellowship of the gods, "in contubernio deorum."

THE hypothesis of a life after this, especially when it was accompanied by that of a life preceding this, which was founded on a supposed

* Vid. BORRI's Letters.

metempsychosis that several systems of religion admitted, served two purposes. It furnished an answer to the accusation which atheists brought, and which theists were too ready to admit in those days, as well as in ours, of unjust dispensations of providence in the distribution of good and evil. This purpose seems very unnecessary to me, who am firmly persuaded that the accusation is a mere sophism, and void of any foundation. But the other purpose was, no doubt, very necessary, since the belief of future rewards and punishments could not fail to have some effect on the manners of men, to encourage virtue, and to restrain vice. For this purpose the doctrine was strongly inculcated from time immemorial. Egypt was the great mistress of religion, as well as of arts and sciences, and the doctrines and rites of her church were dispersed wherever she sent her colonies; those of the mythologia de inferis, among the rest. Whatever MELAMPUS, CADMIUS, and others, carried into Greece, ORPHEUS carried these. He propagated them by his verses and his institutions. But it was your HOMER who spread them most, and gave them the greatest vogue, by his Odysssey and Iliad, those stupendous works, which VIRGIL alone could imitate, and you translate, with success.

ONE cannot see, without surprise, a doctrine so useful to all religions, and therefore incorporated into all the systems of paganism, left wholly out of that of the Jews. Many probable reasons might

might be brought to shew that it was an Egyptian doctrine before the exode, and this particularly, that it was propagated from Egypt so soon at least afterwards, by all those who were instructed, like MOSES, in the wisdom of that people. He transported much of this wisdom into the scheme of religion and government which he gave the Israelites ; and among other things certain rites, which may seem to allude, or have a remote relation, to this very doctrine. Though this doctrine, therefore, had not been that of ABRAHAM, ISAAC, and JACOB, he might have adopted it with as little scruple, as he did many customs and institutions purely Egyptian. He had to do with a rebellious but a superstitious, people. In the first character, they made it necessary that he should neglect nothing which might add weight to his ordinances, and contribute to keep them in awe. In the second, their disposition was extremely proper to receive such a doctrine, and to be influenced by it. Shall we say that an hypothesis of future rewards and punishments was useless among a people who lived under a theocracy, and that the future judge of other people was their immediate judge and king, who resided in the midst of them, and who deald out rewards and punishments on every occasion ? Why then were so many precautions taken ? Why was a solemn covenant made with God, as with a temporal prince ? Why were so many promises and threatenings of rewards and punishments, temporal indeed, but future and contingent, as we find in the book of Deuteronomy,

homy, most pathetically held out by MOSES? Would there have been any more impropriety in holding out those of one kind, than those of another, because the Supreme Being, who disposed and ordered both, was in a particular manner present among them? Would an addition of rewards and punishments more remote, but eternal, and in all respects far greater, to the catalogue, have had no effect? I think neither of these things can be said.

WHAT shall we say then? How came it to pass this addition was not made? I will mention what occurs to me, and shall not be over solicitous about the weight that my reflection may deserve. If the doctrines of the immortality of the soul, and of a future state, had been revealed to MOSES, that he might teach them to the Israelites, he would have taught them most certainly. But he did not teach them. They were, therefore, not revealed to him. Why they were not so revealed some pert divine, or other, will be ready to tell you. For me, I dare not presume to guess. But this I may presume to advance, that, since these doctrines were not revealed by God to his servant MOSES, it is highly probable that this legislator made a scruple of teaching them to the Israelites, howsoever well instructed he might be in them himself, and howsoever useful to government he might think them. The superstitious and idolatrous rites of the Egyptians, like those of other nations, were founded on the polytheism and the

mythology that prevailed, and were suffered to prevail, among the vulgar, and that made the sum of their religion. It seemed to be a point of policy to direct all these absurd opinions and practices to the service of government, instead of attempting to root them out. But then the great difference between rude and ignorant nations, and such as were civilised and learned like the Egyptian, seems to have been this, that the former had no other system of religion than these absurd opinions and practices, whereas the latter had an inward, as well as an outward, doctrine. There is reason to believe that natural theology and natural religion had been taught and practised in the antient theban dynasty; and it is probable that they continued to be an inward doctrine in the rest of Egypt, whilst polytheism, idolatry, and all the mysteries, all the impieties, and all the follies of magic, were the outward doctrine. Moses might be let into a knowledge of both, and under the patronage of the princes, whose foundling he was, he might be initiated into those mysteries, where the secret doctrine alone was taught, and the outward was exploded. But we cannot imagine that the children of Israel, in general, enjoyed the same privilege, nor that the masters were so lavish to their slaves of a favor so distinguished, and often so hard to obtain. No. The children of Israel knew nothing more than the outside of the religion of Egypt: and if the doctrine we speak of was known to them, it was known only in the superstitious rites, and with all the fabulous circum-

circumstances in which it was dressed up and presented to vulgar belief. It would have been hard, therefore, to teach, or to renew this doctrine in the minds of the Israelites, without giving them an occasion the more to recal the polytheistical fables, and practise the idolatrous rites they had learned during their captivity. Rites and ceremonies are often so equivocal, that they may be applied to very different doctrines. But when they are so closely connected with one doctrine, that they are not applicable to another, to teach the doctrine is, in some sort, to teach the rites and ceremonies, and to authorise the fables on which they are founded. MOSES, therefore, being at liberty, to teach this doctrine of rewards and punishments in a future state, or not to teach it, might very well chuse the latter ; though he indulged the Israelites, on account of the hardness of their hearts, and by the divine permission, as it is presumed, in several observances and customs which did not lead directly, though even they did so perhaps in consequence, to the polytheism and idolatry of Egypt. But I return to Greece.

XXX.

THE seeds of artificial theology and superstitious devotion, for they go always together, which ORPHEUS and other egyptian missionaries had sowed, were cultivated by theistical philosophers, and the doctrine of a future state particularly. If PYTHAGORAS reported that the soul

of HESIOD was tied to a brazen column, and the soul of HOMER hung upon a tree, for their temerity in ascribing human passions, and the rules of human conduct even to the father of gods and men, as some traditions say; one would be tempted to think that he applied this doctrine of a future state to enforce natural religion alone. But we should deceive ourselves greatly if we thought so. We have none of his writings, if he did write. But we know from DIogenes Laertius, from PORPHYRY, from JAMBlichus, and from other authorities, that he imported from Egypt and the eastern nations an immense stock of the theology and superstition which were in vogue amongst them. If inspiration was not the least, it was not the greatest, of his pretensions. He enveloped his doctrines in mystery, to make them pass for divine, laid the foundations of them out of the ken of human reason, and acquired a great reputation in metaphysics and divine philosophy, by the usual method, by not being understood.

I PASS to SOCRATES and PLATO. The first devoted himself to the reformation of his countrymen with unexampled zeal: and as St. PAUL was the apostle of the gentiles in revealed, we may say that SOCRATES was the same in natural, religion. There was greater simplicity, and less heat of imagination, in the master than in the scholar. Sober prose was the language of one. A poetical enthusiasm was that of the other. One was fitter to reform his own age by his discourses, the other to excite

excite the admiration of posterity by his writings. Good sense and truth served the purpose of one much less, than wit and beauty of style served the purpose of the other. The very extravagancies of PLATO, for which he deserved at least as much as HOMER to be banished out of his own Utopia, recommended him to after-ages; and there have been many, as there are still some, who would say, like TULLY in one of his rants, “errare me-“hercule malo cum PLATONE, quam cum ipsis vera “sentire.” But, notwithstanding the difference I make, and which is true in general, between these philosophers, notwithstanding the accusation which XENOPHON, who took minutes of the discourses of SOCRATES, laid against PLATO for corrupting the doctrine of their common master, it is certain, and XENOPHON himself might be brought to prove, that if SOCRATES did not say every thing which PLATO made him say, yet he lost himself sometimes in clouds of metaphysics, as much as he was afraid to do in those of physicks, from whence he has been so much applauded for bringing philosophy down to the affairs of human life, to things of real use, and to knowledge within our reach. How could it be otherwife? SOCRATES was a great reasoner *a priori*, as well as PLATO, even in the establishment of natural religion. To contemplate God, or the eternal ideas which exist in God, and to abstract the soul from corporeal sense, were soon made, by the encouragement which this school, the senate of philosophy, gave to such theology, the two great objects of it; so

that the best of theistical philosophers were in effect eunomians, long before that bishop of Cyzicus lived, who boasted that he knew God as well as God knew himself. Such were the principles of that artificial theology which the Greeks had brought from Egypt and Asia, which they carried back thither with all their own improvements, which was dispersed from these countries north and south, east and west, and in the glare of which men lost sight of natural religion.

WHAT philosophers began, priests carried on with no small advantage to themselves, but without any to religion. I will not say, as generally as some have done, that they made it no part of their business to teach the people virtue, nor any thing more than the tricks of religion *, because it is not strictly true, and Mr. LOCKE, in his zeal against priesthood, asserted a little too much. The schools of the philosophers were indeed the schools of morality; but even the tricks of religion had some intention to promote it. This only I will say, and it is enough. The reformation of mankind was not their principal aim, and the little they did to deter men from vice was done in a method that could not fail to have, as in fact it had, a contrary effect. The observation of ceremonies, of feasts, and solemnities that had no foundation in reason, and that were arbitrarily prescribed by ecclesiastical discipline, tho' sometimes under the pretence of revelation, were made

* Vid. Reasonab. of Christianity.

the chief means of pleasing the gods, and of pacifying them when they were angry. From hence two great mischiefs arose. Religion became form and ceremony, and the observation of forms and ceremonies of greater moment than the practice of moral duties, though the practice of these was recommended too. This cannot be illustrated better than by the example of your church. No one can say that she allows men to cheat and to rob one another. On the contrary, she requires that they should be just in all their dealings. But yet absolution for fraud or theft will be obtained from the priest, who cannot give it for eating a slice of meat on the vigil of some saint. Thus artificial theology and superstition oppressed true religion, and priests found the secret of persuading mankind that God was better pleased with obedience to their laws, than to his own,

Thus too sins were multiplied, and with them the terrors of an incensed deity. But the same priests, who spread the terrors, shewed easy means of expiating the sins that caused them. Wherever superstition prevails, those sins which the priests make, by forbidding what the law of nature has left indifferent, or by imposing duties that have no relation to true religion, will be always esteemed the greatest. Sins, therefore, which are no sins, may be expiated very properly by punishments which are no punishments, and several ceremonies performed may atone for several omitted. But the abuse is abominable

when the same expiations and atonements are applied to real sins, and priests do little else than dispense arbitrarily with the laws of nature, which are the laws of God. That no repentance was required in these cases by the pagan divines, I do not say. The very forms used in the celebration of their mysteries seem to shew that it was, and that the impenitent could not be initiated. But this very repentance was little, if any thing, more than matter of form, confession, some temporary penance, ablutions, purifications, and other tricks of regeneration. Amendment, without these, was impracticable or insufficient; and with these, which might be repeated as often as occasion required, unnecessary: so that Mr. LOCKE had reason to say the priests sold good pennyworths. On the whole matter, if men were more powerfully allured to virtue, and deterred from vice, by the hopes and fears of a future state held out to every one in particular, than they could be by the consequences to mankind, in general, of observing or violating natural religion, and by the force of civil laws; yet, in the religions we speak of, one part of the system defeated the other. Some body has observed, MEZERAY I think, that the monstrous crimes so frequent in the devout, that is in the bigot, ages of the christian church, were encouraged by this very devotion. Men were enough bigots to believe that the pardon of God might be obtained for money, or possessions given to his priests, and that crimes of the blackest dye might be expiated by undertaking a pilgrimage, in person,

son, or by proxy, to Rome, ad limen apostolorum. This traffic, for such it was, became so frequent, that, even in times less antient, the church of Rome found it necessary to publish a tariff, or book of rates, which I have seen in print,* wherein the price is set over against every sin, lest purchasers should be imposed upon; and such sins are specified, as the most polluted imagination would hardly conceive. If this abuse was not so exorbitant in the pagan as in the christian church, something of the same kind must have been practised wherever men were taught to fear an angry God, and to believe, at the same time, that they could pacify him with offerings and sacrifices, or, to use an expression of PLATO's, compound with him as they would with an usurer.

THIS single reason will account better for the small progres that was made by the heathen philosophers in reforming mankind, than all those that CLARKE brings. But there is another, and a greater, mischief still behind. Religion gave occasion to atheism, as dogmatism did to scepticism. Superstitious worship, founded in absurd opinions concerning the divine nature, had an effect in that age, which I wish it had never had since. DIAGORAS, for instance, might assume that such a superstitious worship as he beheld could be paid to fictitious gods alone; and, seeing no other worship, he might conclude there were no other gods. From the ridiculous worship,

* In the late CHARLES BERNARD's library.

and the absurd theology that prevailed in all the countries they knew, both he, and THEODORUS, who lived more than twenty olympiads after him, and many more avowed or concealed atheists, might draw the same conclusions, and be mad enough not to discern that a few local observations were not sufficient to invalidate a proposition that might be true independently of them, and that there might be a God, and a true worship of him, tho' all the gods of Greece were fictitious, and the adoration of them was mere superstition.

THESE men were plunged at once, and by indignation, as it were, into atheism; whilst others went into it by dint of philosophical refinements more leisurely, less directly, and some of them against the primitive doctrines of their own schools.

XXXI.

LET us consider what happened in the academy, and what the consequence was of all that metaphysical theology which the founder of it was supposed, by his immediate successors, and by other philosophers, to have taught dogmatically. If SPEUSIPPUS, XENOCRATES, CRATES, CRANTOR, and POLEMO, did not teach exactly the same dogmas, they taught on the same principles of chimerical knowledge that their founder had done; and, in this sense, it might be said, *quae acceperant tuebantur*. Other sects of dogmatists arose

at the same time, and among the rest one which gave a principal occasion to that revolution in the academy which ARCESILAUS began, and CARNEADES improved. The fact, I mean, was that of the Stoicks, concerning whom it is true to say, that their theclogy and their moral philosophy were alike absurd. By one they drew the divinity down to be a sort of plastic, intelligent, fiery nature. By the other, they strained their notions of human wisdom and virtue so high, that man was obliged to God for neither: he gave them to himself, and God and man were in these respects nearly on a level.

ZENO, who founded the Portic, had been an auditor in the academy, and was accused of pirating his philosophy from the lessons of XENOCRATES and POLEMO, when he set up his school as a rival to the other. POLEMO had taught that the world was God, for instance: and ZENO had adopted this among other extravagancies. When the contest ran high between him and ARCESILAUS, the latter saw by this instance, and by many, that he lay under a double disadvantage. He had the doctrines of his own school to defend; and it was no easy task to defend, by reason, a system of imagination. His adversaries had often the authority of his own school, and of the founder of it, to urge against him, when he attacked them even in their weakest parts. He changed, therefore, his method of philosophising. No matter whether he did it, as LUCULLUS says, by introducing

ducing a new one, or, as CICERO affirms,* by reviving and avowing the old one. When the maxim was established, that nothing could be known, “ *nihil cognosci, nihil percipi, nihil sciri posse*,” the academicians could always attack, and never be attacked. This I take to have been the political secret of ARCESILAUS. But whatever his secret was, he established scepticism: and Socrates and PLATO had given him but too much reason to make it the academical principle. As there was little difference, except in name, between the second and third academy, so there was little, that it is easy or worth our while to ascertain, between this sect, and another founded about the same time by that melancholy madman PYRRO. One acknowledged probability: both denied certainty.

THE Pyrrhonian is against all sides: and all sides are against him. He is a common enemy, “ *hostis philosophici generis*. ” The academician would pass, if he could, for a neuter, who is for no side, nor against any; or else for a trimmer, who changes sides often, and finds the probable sometimes on one, sometimes on the other. TULLY, most of whose works are come down to us, is a standing portrait in our sight of the true academician. In his Academical questions he opposes to LUCULLUS the variety and the repugnancy of all the philosophical systems. In his books about

* In academ.

the nature of the gods, he makes COTTA oppose the Epicureans and the Stoicians both in their turns: The conclusion is always against embracing any of these systems: and so far doubtless he concluded well. But here lay the error. When he assented to the probability of some, and to the certainty of no proposition whatever, he confounded truth with falsehood, as LUCULLUS objects to him that he did; just as much as the sect of LUCULLUS, or any other dogmatists, who put every thing they advanced into the same class of certainty. The Stoicians would have assented to this proposition, "it is now light in a full sunshine," with the same assurance, and with no more than they would have assented at any other time to this, "the world is a wise being." Such has been the dogmatical impertinence, for it deserves this name, of all those in every age, and in every sect of philosophy or religion, who have imagined they could impose by authority, or who have had the affectation of framing, complete systems concerning the universal order and state of things, divine and human. It is this practice which has laid the men who submitted to it under a sort of intellectual tyranny, and which has driven those, who have not submitted to it, into a sort of intellectual anarchy. The fault of all lies at the door of the dogmatist; for there is in science, as there is in government, a middle between tyranny and anarchy, far better than either of them. I will explain myself by two examples: and they shall be very modern, that the antients may not blush alone.

ONE of the CROZATS, a family well known at Paris, went to take his leave of CLEMENT the eleventh, before he returned from Rome. The holy father asked, whether he had finished his purchase of a certain collection of paintings ? CROZAT answered, that he had not; that there were several obscene pieces in the collection, and that the confessors in his country would not allow him to keep them. The pope reflected on this occasion, with no small concern, on the number of Jansenists, who teach a more rigid morality, and who abound in the church of France. However, said the pontiff, you might conclude your purchase, because it would be easy to sell such of those paintings, as your confessor would not suffer you to keep. CROZAT replied, that the same confessors, who would not suffer him to keep them, would as little permit him to sell them, and thereby contribute to the sin of another. CLEMENT smiled at the scruple, and proposed an expedient. Though your confessor, said his holiness, should object, if you sold these pictures to catholics, he could have no objection to make, if you sold them to heretics, to the English for instance. That is, the English neither believe in me, nor in any thing like me ; they had, therefore, as good believe in nothing : they are, therefore, damned ; and a sin the more will do none of them any great harm.

THE other example shall be that of a better divine perhaps than the pope, but of as great a dogmatist.

matist. CLARKE undertook to demonstrate not only the being and attributes of God, and the obligations of natural religion, by reason ; but even the truth and certainty of christian revelation. Now the latter of these being his ultimate view, it was necessary that he should prove the two first in such a manner, and by such arguments, as were not always the best and most persuasive, but were the fittest to demonstrate, on pretended grounds of reason, such a scheme, order, and state of things as were agreeable to christian revelation, and to the received principles of the church. If he could not carry reason with him throughout, he resolved to carry some appearances of it : and for that purpose he argues in such a manner, and attempts to establish such notions from the first, as he flattered himself would secure these appearances to him on every part of his subject, assisted with all the skill, all the subtilty, and all the plausibility, he was able to employ. When he is to prove that the first cause is an intelligent cause, without which he had proved in effect nothing, he has recourse to arguments *a posteriori*. There are, indeed, no others, and he owns as much : for which reason he might have been more favourable to them, than I have observed already that he was. But he could not have established by them some things, that he hoped to establish by the others, as I shall have occasion, to shew more fully when I come to vindicate providence against the joint accusations of atheists and divines. All that I mean, and that is to my purpose to observe here, is this. A necessary

fary connection between the natural and moral attributes of God, no man, who believes in him, will deny : all the perfections of an all-perfect Being must be consistent and connected ; to be otherwise would be imperfection. Divines, therefore will have nothing on this head with which to reproach any true atheist: and they had best take care that the true theist has no just occasion to reproach them for setting these attributes at variance, as he might have, if he followed the rule CLARKE quotes from TULLY *, and considered the consequences of their opinions, without regarding what they affirm, nor how honourably they may seem to speak of some particular attributes of God †. But that which may be reproached to CLARKE, and for which I produce his example, is, that when he has asserted justice, and goodness, and the rest of the moral attributes, to be in God just what they are in our imperfect, unsteady, complex ideas ; when he has asserted that the rule, according to which God exercises these attributes, the nature and reason of things resulting from the fitness and unfitness of their relations, is obvious to the understandings of all intelligent beings ; and when he has rather repeated these bold propositions over and over than proved them (for how should he prove them ?) he triumphs in this foolish and wicked rhodomontade, that the man who denies

* Quasi ego id curem quid ille aiat aut neget : illud quaero quid ei consentaneum sit dicere. De fin: l. ii.

† Evid. p. 22.

the moral attributes, such as he makes them to be, for moral attributes, in general, are not concerned, may be reduced to a necessity of denying the natural likewise, and consequently into absolute atheism. Your pope pretends to make universal and infallible decrees in matters of religion; our doctor infallible demonstrations: and both of them send every one to the devil who does not believe in them, and in all cases like them.

XXXII.

THOUGH I do not believe PLATO to have been a dogmatist, even when he appears such, on the faith of St. AUSTIN, any more than I believe ARCESILAUS to have disguised his real sentiments, and to have continued a dogmatist, even when he avowed scepticism, on the faith of the same saint, or of a passage in SEXTUS EMPIRICUS; yet must it be owned that SOCRATES and he laid the foundation of a metaphysical dogmatism, which the latter Pythagoricians and Platonicians revived long afterwards, and which prevails to this day. It was a maxim of theirs, that we may have knowledge concerning things perceptible by intellect, but opinion only concerning things perceptible by sense; and it was on the strength of this maxim, perhaps, that the former, after he had brought philosophy down from the clouds, went up thither again to find the principles of morality, and the rules of human life. Whether we pretend, like those philosophers, to contemplate immaterial forms, and

the eternal ideal archetypes that exist in God, or whether we assert that all the relations of things appear to us what they are absolutely and necessarily in themselves, there is an infallible, though human, criterion established, to which, says CLARKE, and he quotes the bible for it, even God himself appeals.

FROM such knowledge as this, knowledge which no man ever had, or could have, the whole system of artificial theology, which corrupted natural religion, was deduced. It served in no sort to promote the reformation of mankind, and it involved the professors of it in a thousand difficulties and disputes that rendered them ridiculous to one another, and every one perhaps to himself, unless there were some as enthusiastical and as mad in those days as PLOTINUS, PORPHYRY, JAMBlichus, and others grew to be, after the beginning of christianity. Thus it came about that the great theological, that is, the platonic, school went from one extreme into another. It suited the vanity of these philosophers better to assert that nothing was to be known in general, than to own that the reputation of their school in particular had been raised on a fantastic science: and after exercising their wit to prove that they were masters of divine knowledge, they exercised it to prove that they knew nothing, no not the existence of a Supreme Being.

THE truth is, that the philosophy of the academy became little more than an exercise of wit and elo-

eloquence. TULLY purges himself, in one place, from the imputation of engaging in the academical feit on these motives, or on that of loving to dispute *; and yet he confesses, in the second Tusculan, that the custom of disputing on every side pleased him, because it was “maxima dicendi exercitatio.” But whatever engaged him in it, his engagements carried him very far, as we may see in his books Of the nature of the gods. I cite these, because they serve extremely to my purpose, which is to shew, by contrasting the Stoicians and the Academicians together (for the Epicureans cannot have their place here, though they too were dogmatists) how unfit the philosophers of both these schools were, from very opposite causes and different extremes, to establish the fundamental principle of true religion, or indeed to establish any thing. The discourse of BALBUS is a rhapsody of sense and nonsense, of very good arguments a posteriori that there is a God, “esse alii quod numen praestantissimae mentis,” of sophistical syllogisms to prove the same thing a priori, and of idle traditions, gravely produced to confirm the whole by fact as well as reason. All this he advances with equal assurance, the weak and the strong, the false and the true. BALBUS could do no otherwise. He had the task of explaining and defending artificial, not natural, theology; superstition, not religion. He was obliged, therefore,

* Ostentatione aliqua . . . aut studio certandi.

as all they are whose ultimate end is error, to proceed from the first on principles ill assumed, to reason falsely, and to conclude precariously, but dogmatically. The discourse of COTTA is an ingenious declamation, wherein he refutes the stoical system, and renders it ridiculous. But then he disputes so vehemently against it, and his arguments extend so far, that TULLY * makes his own brother accuse the pontiff directly, and himself by consequence indirectly, of atheism. “ Studio “ contra stoicos differendi, deos mihi videtur fun-“ ditus tollere.” What says TULLY in his own name? He tells his brother that COTTA disputes in that manner, rather to confute the Stoicks, than to destroy the religion of mankind “... magis... “ quam ut hominum debeat religionem.” But QUINTUS answers, that is, TULLY makes him answer, he was not the bubble of an artifice, employed to save the appearance of departing from the public religious institutions, “ ne communi “ jure migrare videatur.” When you join to this short conversation, the expression, which concludes the third book Of the nature of the gods, where TULLY says very drily, that the disputation of BALBUS seemed to him the most probable, “ ad “ veritatis similitudinem propensior,” you will see that, if the academicians did not profess atheism, because they could profess nothing, yet some of them might esteem this to be the most probable opinion, as TULLY esteemed that of theism to be, even when the absurdities of the portic were blended

* De Divin. l. i.

with it or deduced from it. Thus doubt concerning the existence of any superior Being arose in the same school, from which so much artificial theology had been propagated : and the sublime doctrines of the divine PLATO ended in arrant scepticism, as they led to it, and as he designed they should, if the man in the world who admired him the most, who seemed to have lived with him, and who would rather have erred with him, than have been in the right with others, all which are TULLY's own professions, knew him better than St. AUSTIN or any modern pedant.

XXXIII.

THESE first and crude reflections may be sufficient to shew that the heathen philosophers were not unable to reform mankind, for the reasons given by Dr. CLARKE, but for reasons of a very different kind. I might even have saved myself the trouble perhaps of descending into so many particulars ; since it would have been not only an answer *ad hominem*, but a full answer to all that can be urged in favor of the same hypothesis, to have asked, whether the reformation, which heathen philosophers could not bring about effectually, has been effected under the jewish and christian dispensations ? Under these, all the knowledge, and all the means, which are assumed to be necessary, and to have been deficient in the state of paganism, as well as some means really wanting to the philosophers, were amply supplied.

CONSIDER judaism as a religion given by God himself, in the most ostensible manner, to a people whom he chose to be his peculiar people, whom he separated from the rest of mankind, and with whom he made a solemn covenant. Consider the whole series of miracles, that were wrought to convince, to persuade, to assist and defend, to reward and to punish, this people occasionally. Add to all this, that God exercised kingly power amongst them for a time, and that the Shecinah, or his divine presence over the mercy-seat, continued amongst them till the destruction of their first temple. Consider this, and then consider that their history is little else than a relation of their rebelling and repenting, of their proneness to one, and of the extreme difficulty with which they were drawn, even by supernatural means, to the other. Consider that these rebellions were not those of particular men, surprised and hurried into disobedience by their passions, but national deliberate violations of the law and defiances of the Supreme Being. Is it possible that any one, who believes the history of the bible true, should believe, after he has read it, that the want of a divine authority, and of a principle higher than reason, hindered the heathen philosophers from reforming the world effectually; that they would have succeeded, if they had really had them, as they sometimes pretended to them; and that, for this reason, which they were sagacious enough to discover, they desired and expected a revelation? Surely it is impossible.

THE

THE Jews had not such continual and immediate communications with God by their high priest and their prophets, after their return from the babylonian captivity, as before it; neither were they eye-witnesses of such frequent manifestations of his glory and power, as their fathers had been: and yet what a reformation, in point of religion, was wrought among them after the re-establishment of their church and state? How much more zealously and steadily were they attached to their law? This difference was owing, no doubt, to the institution of synagogues in every place where a congregation of ten persons could be assembled, and to other improvements of their ecclesiastical discipline and worship, which had a wonderful effect on the spirit of the people, raised it to enthusiasm, but preserved it orthodox. SOCRATES and PLATO then, to quote no others of the heathen philosophers, might have had the same success in reforming the manners of men, and in restoring the purity of natural religion at Athens, without any divine mission, that ESDRAS and NEHEMIAS had at Jerusalem in reviving and improving more effectually the ceremonies and observances of judaism, by means which experience and good policy suggested to them, if the two Greeks had been, as the two Jews were, the legislators and second founders of their commonwealth.

THERE is so little pretence to draw the shadow of an argument from the ineffectual endeavours

of the heathen philosophers to reform the world, that the world has not been effectually reformed, nor any one nation in it, even by the promulgation of the gospel, even where christianity has flourished most in speculation and external devotion. The Son of God, God himself, came upon earth, was born of a woman, lived among men, preached a new covenant, wrought miracles, sent his disciples to all nations, who established his church among them. What has happened? This church has been so far from reforming mankind, that it stood in need of being itself reformed as soon as it was established. The gates of hell have not yet prevailed against it, and we are to believe that they never will. But the gates of hell have shook it extremely in all ages, and the prince of hell has made, from the first, most terrible incursions within the pale of it. Much zeal has been expressed about articles of faith, much regard has been paid to the outward service of God; and wealth, and power, and pomp, and dignity have been lavishly bestowed on an order of men, who affect to be thought successors to the apostles, and whose institution is avowedly directed to reform the manners of men, as well as to preserve the purity of faith. Every defect, except that of not living up to their doctrines, which is supposed to have rendered the preachers of natural religion incapable of reforming the world, has been supplied in the preachers of revealed religion. The doctrines of these men have been certainly enforced by a divine authority: and they

they have been assisted by an higher principle than philosophy and bare reason. They had antiently all the advantages of opposition and persecution. They have enjoyed ever since, and during a course of fourteen centuries, all those of support and of favour from civil government, and of blind submission from the people. With all these advantages they have not wrought a more effectual reformation. Morality has not been better taught by them, nor better practised under their influence. On the contrary, having united in themselves the two characters of philosophers and priests, they have often sacrificed the former to the latter, not for the sake of revealed religion, which is founded on natural, and can require no such sacrifice; but, like the priests of paganism, for the sake of their craft.

EXAMPLES will be brought, I know, in opposition to what is here advanced. Examples of a religious zeal, which prevailed among all the primitive christians to such a degree, that though some of them declined, many of them courted, martyrdom; examples of particular men, who have deserved a sort of apotheosis for the purity of their doctrines and the sanctity of their lives: and examples, on the other hand, of pagan ferocity and cruelty, contrasted with christian moderation and charity. It would not be hard, but it would be a long and invidious task, to shew, in a variety of instances, how partially these examples are produced, and these comparisons are made. Let us be content with a few general reflections.

THAT

THAT a religious and enthusiastical zeal animated many of the primitive christians, both the orthodox and the heretics, is most certain. But to make the example prove what it is designed to prove, this zeal should have been singular, a peculiar effect of christian revelation: whereas nothing is, nor has been ever, more common. The zeal of the Jews, whilst they lived in the midst of revelations, and miracles, was not comparable to that which they shewed when they had nothing but the foolish comments of their mischnical doctors, instead of one, and enthusiastical visions and superstitious signs instead of the other. We shall find the same if we go for examples to many of the pagan nations. We shall find not only particular men, but whole bodies of men, among them, as well as among Christians, ready to devote themselves to death, not only for their absurd religions, but for their attachment to a party, or to the most whimsical point of imaginary honour. It is not much to that of revelation, therefore, to ascribe to it what may be the effect of imposture and error: and enthusiasm is no more a proof of true religion, than martyrdom is of a good cause.

THE examples of men, reputed saints for the purity of their doctrine and the holy austerity of their lives, will avail as little to shew that the christian revelation reformed the world any more, than the endeavours of heathen philosophers,

Their

Their doctrines, the doctrines of these saints I mean, were such as related either to the metaphysical speculations of theology, and to the practice of ceremonies and rites established for outward worship and ecclesiastical discipline, or to moral obligations and the duties of natural religion. About the first, and second, it must be confessed that the pastors of the church were in those days, as they are in ours, extremely intent. But the disputes that arose among them, on all such occasions, and the scandal with which they were carried on by all sides, leave it very doubtful to whom this purity is to be ascribed; and much more probable that it was to be ascribed to none. It seems that no side had a good claim to it, in many cases, whilst the disputes lasted. When they were determined by councils, however this determination was procured, a standard of purity was assumed to be fixed; and authority did what neither reason nor revelation could do, it ascertained orthodoxy in belief and practice, till new disputes arose, or till old ones were revived. These doctrines and these rites have been so far from reforming the world, that they have promoted, by the disputes raised about them, more hatred, malice, and uncharitableness, than ever was in it before. They have diminished the flames neither of ambition nor avarice. They have added fresh fuel to them, and have kindled new flames of their own. In short, the examples of these saints, with respect to these doctrines, will never prove the utility of revelation; and with

with respect to those that regard moral obligations, and the duties of natural religion, they either neglected them, or taught them more imperfectly than several of the heathen philosophers. When I say that they neglected them, this I mean: The theology contained in the gospel lies in a very narrow compass. It is marvellous, indeed, but it is plain: and it is employed, throughout, to enforce natural religion. This seems to be the end, and revealed religion the means; both which it would have been for the honour of christianity and for the good of mankind to have left so. But the saints, that have been quoted, took another course from the first. Instead of making theology, and the external duties of religion, serve as means, they insisted on them as if knowledge in metaphysics, ceremony, and ecclesiastical dominion had been the principal ends of revelation. They insisted on them so constantly and so voluminously, that natural religion held but the second place in their system, and that righteousness of faith became much more important than righteousness of works. On this account we may say that they neglected, in some sort, the doctrines of natural religion: they practised them ill, and they could scarce fail to teach them both imperfectly and erroneously; since they derived them, *a priori*, from principles of their own theology, and from the ideas they framed of the divine attributes, instead of deriving them, *a posteriori*, from the constitution of the human system. To this we must ascribe the wild allegories, with which



which they perplexed the plainest dictates of reason, the affected refinements, which are impracticable in any national society, and the immoral doctrines which ought to have been banished, with the saints who taught them, out of all societies. The charge I bring is not that of passion, nor prejudice, no, nor of ignorance. I am able to justify it in all it's parts, by some instances: and if you would see it made good by more, and by more learned authorities, consult such writers as BARBEYRAC, who was provoked by a saucy monk to publish his book, *La moralité des peres*. Consult other critics, of whom there are many. Nay, consult the authors who deny this charge: and I will appeal to your judgment on what you find even in them, provided you weigh the facts in the balance of common sense, and pay no regard to their judgments.

THUS much for purity of doctrine. Much less needs to be said about holiness and austerity of life. The histories of saints have been in all religions, even more than those of any other eminent persons, little better than panegyrical romances. The reason of which is obvious enough: No man, for instance, is so silly, I presume, at this time, unless he be a rosicrucian, as to give any more credit to the biographers of the egyptian hermits, ANTONY and PAUL, than to those of PYTHAGORAS and APOLLONIUS of Thyana. All their relations are stuffed alike with the most evident falsehoods, the most puerile absurdities, and

and the grossest superstitions: for many of these were common to Pagans, Jews, and Christians: and yet the first of the biographers I mention, who yield in none of these respects to PORPHYRY, JAMBЛИCHUS, PHILOSTRATUS, or any other compiler of lying legends, were famous saints, ATHANASIUS and JEROM. But further: if we allow the sanctity and austerity of some particular men, or of some particular orders of men, to have been, and to be, as great as they are represented, this will be far from proving the reformation of the world by christianity. There were antiently, among the heathens, chaldeans, gymnosophists, and others; and there are now, both among them and the Mahometans, particular men, and orders of men, of great sanctity of life, nay of greater than any among christians: if sanctity be to be measured, as they who would make the objection I answer measure it, by austerity. It is unnecessary to quote the instances, which are to be found in all our books of travels. Even SIMEON STYLITES, who stood fasting and praying on the top of a column so many years together, has been outdone by multitudes. What now can be said? If these examples are not sufficient to prove that heathen philosophers and mahometan doctors have reformed the world, will examples of the same, or of an inferior, kind prove that christianity has?

IT will not be said, I think, that luxury and debauchery have been restrained by christianity.

It

It was a proverbial saying, “Daphnicis moribus
“ vivere.” and CASSIUS, if I remember right,
would not suffer his army to encamp at Antioch,
lest his soldiers should be corrupted by the man-
ners of the place. But where is the court or city,
in which christianity is professed, to which this
phrase might not be applied? I know of none:
nor is there any good reason to believe there was
any such antiently, neither that of CONSTANTINE,
whatever his panegyrist advances, nor that of
CHARLEMAGNE, tho’ your church has thought fit
for other reasons to make saints of both these
princes. Upon this, therefore, divines will be
ashamed to insist, or may be easily made so: since
it is not difficult to shew them, that the men of
their own order, who did not mend their manners
afterwards, were famous even in the fourth cen-
tury for following those of Daphne. But it will
be founded high, that the patience, moderation,
and charity, which christianity inspires, softened
the turbulent, fierce, and cruel temper of paga-
nism; and wrought, by doing this, a wonderful
reformation in the world. You must remember that
this fact has been asserted to be undeniable, and yet
it is false: the very contrary is true. CONstan-
TINE did, I believe, expect that the establishment
of the christian religion in the empire would have
this effect. But his expectation proved vain:
and I might appeal to the ecclesiastical and civil
history of the last fourteen hundred years, that
is, from his days to ours, to vouch for me. The
whole tenor of them proves that revolts against
govern-

government, and disorders of every kind, have been at least as frequent in the christian world as in the pagan: There were never more, nor more unjust, nor more cruel, wars, than Christians have waged: and the persecutions and massacres, that may be reproached to them, are such, in all circumstances of inhumanity, as can be reproached to no other people, except the Jews. That any part of these evils ought to be ascribed to gospel-christianity, I neither say nor believe. They cannot be reconciled to the principles of it. But this I say, and believe, that the christian revelation has not effectually reformed the world. There never was in itself a more risible, nor in it's consequences a more lamentable, absurdity imposed on mankind than this, that a certain order of men should be instituted, not only to preside in the exercises of public worship, and to exhort others to the practice of their known duties; but to think for the rest, and to dictate opinions to them on matters of nice speculation, concerning which they themselves were never agreed, and which have no immediate connection with these known duties. This absurdity, however, has prevailed in the christian, as in other religions of positive institution: and in this, as in them, the spirit of the clergy has become the spirit of the religion. They, who should have preached concord, have preached discord; and they, who should have promoted peace, have animated to war. They have given continual pretence to ferocity and cruelty; they have often irritated them above their

their usual excesses: and the profane application of a scrap * of the gospel has served to deluge whole nations in blood. A private opinion, however true, that was not exactly conformable to an ecclesiastical decision, was termed heresy; and against such heresy, as against the greatest of crimes, the passions of men were inflamed under the name of zeal.

THOUGH I avoid to descend into particulars, let me just compare natural ferocity and cruelty with religious, by mentioning one example of the former, and two of the latter. The barbarous people, who broke into the roman empire, had no motives but those of plundering wealthy provinces, and settling in better climates. Religion was so far from being a motive to these enterprises; that they embraced generally that of the nations they conquered. They were guilty, no doubt, of great violence and cruelty: but when you have read the most exaggerated accounts of their proceedings, read those, which are contained in the Bible, of the invasion of Palestine, and those which Spanish authors themselves give of the invasion of America. These events, that happened at an immense distance of time, and were brought about under very different economies of religion and policy, are, therefore, the more proper to shew how religion may furnish a pretence to natural ferocity and cruelty, as well as aggra-

* Compel them to come in.

vate both; and that it has always done so either by it's own spirit, as in the case of judaism, or by that of it's teachers, as in the case of christianity. When the Israelites marched to the conquest of Canaan, the ark and the priests marched before them. An antient promise, which God made to ABRAHAM, when he made that covenant with him which was the foundation of their religion, was the foundation of the justice of this expedition: and the immediate commands of God were urged to authorise such extirpations of people, as no other history can parallel, as it is impossible to read without horror, as were unnecessary to give them a secure possession of the country, and as neither this reason, nor any other, could excuse. When the Spaniards sailed to the conquest of America, silver and gold were their objects, but the propagation of the gospel was their pretence. That wretch, pope ALEXANDER the sixth, made them a donation of an entire hemisphere: and priests and monks were sent, that they might add the fury of bigotry to that of avarice.

I MIGHT rest the matter here, having said enough to shew how false and trifling the argument is, which CLARKE endeavours to draw from an incapacity in the heathen philosophers, both for want of knowledge, which was not, and for want of other means, which was, their case, to reform mankind, and from the assumed sufficiency of revelation alone to produce this effect. But

I chuse to wind up the whole, by desiring you to retrace, in your mind, the progress made in sociability, civility, and every moral virtue, in the heathen republics of Greece and Rome, before and since the christian revelation. Authors may declaim as much as they please, to aggravate particular vices, and to take off from the lustre of particular virtues; they will persuade no man, who reads and judges for himself, that the practice of piety and virtue has increased among the Greeks, from the time of CONSTANTINE downwards, under the influence of christian pastors, as it did, under the influence of heathen philosophers and legislators, from the time when THUCYDIDES represents them like lawless savages who went pirating and ravishing about, to the days when Athens and Sparta flourished. As little will the same authors persuade that the distance in virtue, between that rout of shepherds and outlaws who formed a state under ROMULUS, and the citizens of Rome in the best ages of that commonwealth, was not vastly greater than any improvement of the same kind, that was made among them from the time that Rome became christian.

IF it appears now to be true in fact that neither reason nor revelation, neither heathen nor christian philosophers, neither human nor divine laws, have been able to reform the manners of men effectually; may we not, nay must we not, conclude that such a reformation is inconsistent

with the original constitution of the human system? Must we not conclude that appetites, passions, and the immediate objects of pleasure, will be always of greater force to determine men than reason, and the more remote object, as well as complicated notion, of happiness? Such is the imperfect state in which we are placed; a state wherein the vice and virtue of our moral, like the good and evil of our physical, world prevail in their turns, and are often at the best, and in the most favourable circumstances, but equally balanced on the whole. Why there is such a state as this, and how to reconcile it to the ideas of holiness and goodness, let those men enquire, who say that God appeals to man, who take him at his word, and presume to judge him accordingly. But let you and I pronounce, that since there is such a state as this in the universal system, it was fit and right that there should be such a state. On this head we may, we ought to be dogmatical.

XXXIV.

WHAT has been here laid down is so far from making natural, or revealed religion, or any means that tend to the reformation of mankind, unnecessary, that it makes them all more necessary. Since our state is so imperfect; since it is so hard to keep the virtues that are intimately connected with the happiness, and the vices that are intimately connected with the misery, of mankind,

kind, even on a balance; nothing should be neglected that may give the advantage to the former, by enforcing moral obligations and all the doctrines of natural religion. As nothing should be neglected, so nothing may seem in speculation so proper to this purpose, as a true revelation, or a revelation believed to be true; and if experience has not confirmed speculation in the case of a revelation we believe to be true, if christianity, which has enforced natural religion in some respects, has corrupted it in others, the maxim may still remain unshook. The natural, the genuine effect of the gospel has been defeated and perverted, and much has been done towards lessening the authority of it, by the manner in which it has been propagated.

IF it had been propagated with the same simplicity and plainness, with which it was taught originally by the author of it, natural religion would have been enforced, and could not have been corrupted, by christianity; but a voluminous and intricate system of artificial theology was grafted on it: both which observations have been made already, and must be often repeated for the honour of the gospel. This system was framed soon by habits contracted in the schools of judaism and paganism. In the first, their second or oral law, that is, their traditions were taught: and what this science was may be seen in the collection of them made a century and an half after

CHRIST, by one of their rabbins;* the small obligation of being acquainted with which we ignorant persons owe to the labors of several great scholars. What the science taught in the others was, we know from the remains of pythagorean doctrines, and from the writings of PLATO, that are come down to us, and that were in great vogue among the first teachers of christianity. Well might these men grow credulous in one, fantastical in the other, and superstitious in both. Such were they, whom we call very properly fathers of the church, since they begot the discipline, and much the greatest part of the doctrines, of it. Easily imposed upon, and prone to impose, like the Jews fond of mystery; and of principles of knowledge laid beyond the bounds of all knowledge, like pythagoric and platonic metaphysicians; it is no wonder that they ran into theological obscurity with the light of the gospel shining before them. Accustomed to declaim rather than reason, and to employ figurative style even on subjects that require the most exact determination of ideas and precision of terms, like the rhetors of Greece and Rome; accustomed to advance intrepidly whatever served to the present purpose, without any regard to truth, like the sophists of those ages, which practice St. JEROM † defended and imputed to St. PETER and St.

* JUDAH HAKKADOSH, or the holy,

† Vid. Comm. in Ep. ad Gal. cap. ii,

PAUL; it is no wonder that they opposed sometimes error to error, and very often jargon to jargon.

SUCH science as this, and such habits as these, produced infinite absurdities, grounded on precarious tradition and false reasoning; with which I shall meddle in this place no further than the subject before me requires. To seek the will of God, and the duty of man, in the constitution of the world, and of the human nature, wherein they are most evidently revealed, would have been deemed too low a manner of philosophising for those men to take, who pretended to gifts of the Spirit, whilst that opinion was rife among the first Christians: and when it was so no longer, their successors had a recourse that served them almost as well. They sought the will of God, and the duty of man, in their own comments and paraphrases of scripture, in the abstract reason of things, and in the eternal ideas, where SOCRATES and PLATO had sent men to find whatever is unknown on earth, as ARIOSTO sends them to the moon to find whatever is lost on earth. They deduced moral obligations from the divine attributes, of which they might think themselves more competent judges than others, because they thought themselves better informed by the Jews of his manner of government; and by christian tradition, if I dare to say so, of his private life and conversation.

THESE methods of framing and defending a system of religion were very convenient. They were in the hands of the fathers, what the cabala was in those of the rabbins, If they did not make an oral, they made a second, law ; necessary, like the other, in pretence, to the perfection and to the intelligence of the first ; and that gathered as it rolled on, till it became as voluminous, and, by dint of explanation and commentary, as abstruse. Among other recommendations, insisted on by CLARKE, of these methods of reasoning, from the divine attributes and the eternal reason of things, to the moral obligations under which we are laid by the will of God, whereof I speak particularly here, and to the designs of God in creating the world and man, as well as to the conduct of his providence, in the government of the whole, whereof I shall speak hereafter ; the universality of them is one. Now it is this very universality which aggravates the presumption of mankind, which sets the danger of these methods of reasoning in a stronger light, and which proves invincibly against him that they are far from being what he asserts they are, the best, clearest, and certainest that philosophy affords. When we deduce the will of God, and the duty of man, from the constitution of the world, and of the human nature, we deduce them from real knowledge : and we may have the certainty of this knowledge, through all the parts of natural religion, if we never lose sight of the first principles of it. That men lose this certainty, both philosophers

sophers and others, both they who reason a priori, and sometimes they who reason a posteriori, is true. The vast variety of opinions concerning the morality and immorality of actions, and the number of contradictory laws, that have been all made with the same design, to promote the practice of natural religion, shew it to be so. But the difference lies here. Tho' neither of these methods can secure men absolutely from error in forming general maxims, and much less in the particular applications even of such of these as are true, yet they have in one case a sure criterion, and in the other none at all. The reasoner a posteriori may at all times go back to those principles of knowledge from which he set out, and which he will find always the same ; retrace his own reasonings, and rectify his mistakes. But whither shall the reasoner a priori go ? Shall he go back to the abstract reason of things, and to the moral attributes of the deity, from which he set out ? But in them, as often as he has recourse to them, he will find no such criterion. The notions of other men will differ from his, and the first principles of his boasted knowledge, for want of such a criterion, will be founded in probability at best. It required no such metaphysical apparatus, as CLARKE employs somewhat tediously, to prove that all perfections, natural and moral, must be attributes of the self-existent, all-perfect author of all being : but he does not prove what he asserts, and on the proof of which his whole argument turns, that these attributes are the same in God, as they are in

in our ideas *. He says indeed that he has proved it: and if we do not accept his proofs, he leaves us to recur to downright atheism; nay, he threatens to force us into it. Happily he has not been able to do the mischief he meditated. Many a man believes in God, who does not believe in him. Many a man discerns, in their fullest light, the evidences of natural religion, and gives their due weight to those of revealed religion, without taking assumptions for demonstrations, and a chain of the former, which have an imaginary connection only, for a chain of the latter rising out of one another, and closely connected together.

I HAVE enlarged the rather on this head, because the example of this modern divine is extremely proper to give us an image of the antient divines who raised the theological system. Few of them reasoned so well even as he; but they set the manner which he and the rest of their successors have followed: a manner, which may serve, as it did formerly, and as it does still, in some degree, to realise, in appearance, the whimsies of every over-heated brain, and to maintain indeterminable disputes: a manner, which, proving almost every thing, proves almost nothing, and which, if it can be of any use, can be so only under the control of the other method. It can be only of subordinate use. It may illustrate: it never can, it never did, decide: and the disputes it raised in the early ages of christianity may be well called

* Evid. p. 33. 34. et alibi.

indeterminable, since they are not yet determined. I have good reason to say, though I cannot say it on my own knowledge, that some of them were not determined in CLARKE's own mind, though he has pronounced dogmatically about them in his writings.

WHEN I say that the method of reasoning *a priori*, from the eternal reason of things, and from the divine attributes, may be of some subordinate use, under the control of the other ; I mean that although our moral obligations arise from our moral system, that is, from the works of God, and the additional motives to observe them from the word of God, alone ; yet arguments deduced in this method, and expressly authorised by neither, may serve to warm the imagination, to move the affections, and by a sort of pious fraud to enforce natural religion. A lively declamation, unsupported by reason, and even by gospel revelation, concerning the whole scheme, order, and state of things, from the original design of God in the creation of man to his fall, and from thence to his redemption ; a pathetical exhortation to imitate God, in the exercise of his glorious attributes, in those perfections which are the foundations of his own unchangeable happiness, in which we are able to imitate him, and in which he desires that we should imitate him, because he has an infinitely tenderer and heartier concern for us, than any earthly father has for his posterity, to speak the language of Dr. CLARKE ; such declamations and such exhortations,

tions, I say, may have a great and a good effect, especially when they flow from an eloquent mouth, and from the pulpit. The man, who is convinced by his reflections on human nature, and the nature of society, for instance that benevolence, and justice, and truth are the duties of natural religion, on the practice of which his happiness, and that of his whole kind, depend, will not be further convinced, but he may be more moved, and his passions may be wrought up to second his judgment.

If the fathers of the church, and modern divines, had made no other use of this method of reasoning, than to strengthen a sense of our moral obligations, and to raise in the minds of men a greater veneration for the scriptures, after they had proved the authenticity of them by external proofs; it had been well both for natural and revealed religion. But they have made a very different use of it. They have shook the former down to its very foundation: and, under pretence of explaining and defending the other, they have laid it more open to the attacks of unbelievers. Reason is sober and modest. She never affects to lead men beyond her bounds, but delivers them over to revelation. There is, and there needs must be, something marvellous in revelation. This marvellous dazzles, and often blinds; so that they who pursue it too far slide easily into the whimsies of their own imaginations. Truth warms their brains; error, that passes for it, turns them.

Thus

Thus christianity became fanaticism, even in the first professors of it. Thus artificial theology grew up as fast as men began to teach the doctrine of CHRIST, like a revelation made so obscurely and imperfectly, that they who were to publish it were to explain it, and not only to explain it, but to supply the deficiencies of it : and some will be apt to think that the first of these men was PAUL. Divines would be furious to hear such language held as I hold to you. But they would be under great difficulties to evade the charge, and therefore the more furious ; since I could easily produce passages out of the most renowned of the fathers, and out of their own writings, as extravagant as any in the Talmud, as absurd as any in the Koran, and quite fit to hold their places in one of BORRI's letters : and since the whole ecclesiastical history is an history of the intolerance and violence of Christians to one another, on such points as these, from the time they had it in their power to be intolerant and to persecute. You will not expect a bead-roll of these doctrines and disputes. It will be sufficient to shew how they had the effects that have been mentioned, both in natural and revealed religion.

XXXV.

CLARKE observes, that there is now no such thing as a consistent scheme of theism. A complete one, such an one as presumes to account for the whole order and state of things relatively to God and man, I believe there is not. But

But how does the learned writer make out his proposition? That of the best heathen philosophers, which alone was such, ceases now to be so, he says, after the appearance of revelation; because it directly conducts men to the belief of christianity. If he intends the socratical and platonic scheme, and he can intend no other, what he advances is untrue; unless it be true that a scheme, which appears sometimes dogmatical, and sometimes sceptical, that favours monotheism and polytheism in the same breath, as it were, may be consistent. If this scheme led to christianity in any sort, as I think it did, this was due not to the consistency, but the inconsistency of it. Several of its doctrines were adopted into articles of faith by christianity. Others were rejected. It happened accordingly. This adoption drew several of these philosophers into christianity: and this rejection made several averse to it. JUSTIN died to maintain it. PORPHYRY would have died to oppose it. That platonism was a consistent scheme, or that it conducted men directly to christianity, is not true therefore. But it is very true, that the method of raising a priori, from heaven, if I may say so, that we do not know, to earth, instead of reasoning from earth that we do know, to heaven, was introduced into christianity with doctrines which the same method had broached in paganism; that this method continued to be in common that of those who embraced the christian profession, and of those who opposed it; and that it propagated fanaticism alike in both, as every man,

man, who compares, for instance, St. AUSTIN and PLOTINUS together with indifference, which every man should do in such a case, must confess.

CHRISTIAN fanaticism was more catching and in that respect more dangerous than the other. Some of the heathen saints pretended to ravishments, to extasies, to occasional unions with the supreme intelligence, and to revelation. But those of christianity had, besides all these advantages, the word of God himself to produce against unbelievers, and they hawled this word so well to their purposes (the expression is St. JEROM's *) that every side appealed to in the disputes they had with one another. The consequence was, that every side damned all the rest, and, which was really worse, persecuted them in this world. The heathens exercise great violence against one another in their quarrels about their secular interests ; but religion neither caused nor fomented them : whereas the quarrels of this kind were the most frequent and the most inveterate among Christians. They broke not only the bonds of alliance between nations, but those of kindred in families, and those of friendship where it was the most intimate. Such quarrels turned frequently on metaphysical speculations which no side understood, or on rites and ceremonies of no importance to religion. These were the objects that engrossed, with those of ecclesiastical power and

* *Trahere scripturas.*

wealth, the whole attention of the church, and, under her influence, almost the whole attention of the state, as it appears by the behaviour of the Roman emperors after CONSTANTINE; some of whom seemed to have no other concern in the greatest distress of that empire, and in the very moment of its fall. Nay, there is mention made of one, who had a scruple of conscience about the time he spent in secular affairs, and the government of his people. Thus reformation of manners, was the concern of nobody : and whilst the utmost dissolution of them was practised and indulged by the clergy, men were persecuted, at their instigation, for the least supposed error in forms of speech, or in forms of worship ; and injustice and murder were made duties of religion on this account. Is there not sufficient reason now to assert, that natural religion has been corrupted, and shook to the foundations of it, by artificial theology ?

SOCIABILITY is the great instinct, and benevolence the great law, of human nature, which no other law can repeal, or alter : and yet when men have accustomed themselves to think of the Supreme Being as of an human legislator and governor, and to ascribe to the all-perfect being the same ideas, the same sentiments, affections, and passions, that they perceive in themselves ; they may easily come to imagine, or to make others imagine, him as intent to preserve the outward forms of his court, as the most essential laws of his

his government; and themselves as much bound at least to be good courtiers, as good subjects. They may think themselves surest to please in the first of these characters. On a confidence in the merit of it, they may not only neglect the duties of the other, but they may sacrifice, to a false notion of honouring the prince, the fundamental laws and the constitution of his government. They may think, or they may represent themselves to be, his favourites, and they may treat even his best subjects as rebels, by virtue of laws which his ministers make, and which he is supposed to authorise.

THIS allusion to the abuses of civil government, in the kingdoms of earthly monarchs, gives a true image of those which have always prevailed in the spiritual kingdom of CHRIST, to the subversion of its original constitution: and with this allusion I shall finish this head.

XXXVI.

BUT I have undertaken to shew further, that artificial theology, which has shaken the foundations of natural religion, has laid revealed religion much more open to the attacks of unbelievers; by explanations and defences, than it would have been, if it had been left to stand without them on the proper proofs of this fact singly, it is a divine revelation. Now to illustrate this point, let us suppose a theist objecting to some modest reasoner a posteriori, who is firmly persuaded of the authen-

ticity of the scriptures, that they contain many things repugnant to the justice and goodness of God, and unworthy of his majesty, his wisdom, and power. The believer might reply, that he knows the difference between knowledge produced by the certainty of demonstration, and that assurance which the highest degree of probability may produce; that an assurance founded on any less degree of probability would not be sufficient in this case; but that assurance founded on probability is the utmost which can be had in all cases of this kind; and, therefore, that he thinks himself obliged to receive these books for the word of God, though he cannot reconcile every thing that they contain to his ideas of the attributes of an infinite all-perfect Being. He might add, that he sees and feels many things in the constitution of the physical and moral world, and in the conduct of providence, which it is not easy to reconcile to the same attributes; and yet that he knows, with all the certainty of demonstration, that the former are the works, and the latter the act, of God. He might add, that revelation may be necessary to illuminate reason in matters of religion, because there is a more immediate correspondence in matters of religion between God and man, but that reason cannot explain revelation, nor much less enforce it; that nothing less than another revelation can do either; and that in the mean time it is the duty of man to submit to believe what he does, and to adore what he does not, understand. This the reasoner *a posteriori* might reply with great plausi-

plausibility at least. But the reasoner *a priori* could have no right to use the same language. A theist would retort his own doctrine against him in this manner. " You argue, and you pretend to demonstrate, on your ideas of justice and goodness as well as of wisdom and power, and by the reason of things, even when your arguments and your supposed demonstrations conclude against the constitution and government of the world, which you and I both acknowledge to be from God. With what face then can you object to me, that I reason upon the same ideas, and by the same rule, concerning this book which you acknowledge, and I do not, to be the word of God? Must I respect probability more than you respect certainty, and a probability which is either not established, or is established by halves? It is not established, if the book contains any thing which implies an absolute contradiction with any conceivable perfection even of the human nature. It is established by halves, whatever external proofs you may bring, unless you can shew that the things contained in it, which seem repugnant to all our ideas of a perfect nature, are really consistent with them; which must be shewn not by a precarious begging of the question, but by direct and evident proofs." What now must the reasoner *a priori* do? He must give up the cause to the theist; or he must submit to the task which the reasoner *a posteriori* evaded, by crying out from the first, O altitudo! and by declining to

examine any objections to matters contained in the scriptures: in short, he puts himself under a necessity of shewing that all these matters are exactly consonant to the dictates of sound reason, or the unprejudiced light of nature, and most wisely perfective of it *; and that all the doctrines necessary to salvation, or closely connected with such as are so, are apparently most agreeable to reason, though not discoverable by it †.

THIS task has been undertaken accordingly by every divine; sanguinely and dogmatically by most, weakly by all of them. One of your acquaintance and mine ‡ has distinguished himself, in all these respects, by writing on the subject, as he would have preached to an Irish congregation. But that such a man as CLARKE should write upon it at all, and have nothing better to say than what he has said, may serve to shew how these men are led, by their manner of reasoning, and by their artificial theology, to disarm Christianity of her best defence, by taking her out of the strong-hold of revelation, and by trusting to those feeble entrenchments, which they are able to cast up: for even those which CLARKE cast up are feeble beyond belief. I am not answering his book, and shall, therefore, do no more than make a transient mention of some particulars: but I am willing to rest the truth of what I have advanced, even on this transient mention.

* Evid. p. 239. † Ib. p. 244. ‡ Dr. DELANY.

THE doctor is to prove it agreeable to sound unprejudiced reason to believe, that the Supreme Being did generate a divine person or emanation from himself: and he proves it by asserting that this doctrine contains no manner of absurdity nor contradiction in it. This was more easily asserted than proved, some persons would say. But besides, is it agreeable to reason to believe a proposition true, merely because it does not manifestly imply contradiction? Is every thing, that is possible, probable? or is it reasonable to believe, on the probability that a revelation is a true revelation, any thing that may be possibly not inconsistent with the perfections of the divine nature, but that seems to be so in probable opinion? It is said, that the wisest and most learned of the ancient philosophers received and taught some doctrines as difficult to comprehend, as any thing in this article of the christian faith, and that these men would not have made any objection to it on this account. Agreed. How then does the argument stand? Reduce it to it's just value, and it stands thus. The heathen philosophers taught many doctrines as incomprehensible as this, without any pretence of a divine authority; and their own wild hypotheses would have conducted them readily to receive this, on the authority of a revelation: it is, therefore, agreeable to sound unprejudiced reason, that we, who know how fantastical their whole theology was, should follow the example which it is assumed they would have set us,

and believe, without any of their prejudices, what they might have been induced, by these very prejudices, to believe. This doctrine of the logos or nous was taught in some of the egyptian, and other schools of eastern divinity: and we are not to wonder if PLATO, who had it from them, spoke obscurely, or understood little concerning it, since it is not discoverable by bare reason. But I think that PLATO would not have been more willing than ARIUS, or CLARKE himself, to subscribe to the athanasian creed. He would have assented perhaps, as much as he assented in other cases, to a co-equality of the Son with the Father, as the eternal effect of an eternal cause. But he would not have assented to their co-equality. He assumed that the Son and the Spirit are distinct subordinate beings, and no more co-equal with the one Supreme Being, in the order of nature, than the world was thought to be by ARISTOTLE, and the philosophers who maintained the eternity of it.

ARCHBISHOP TILLOTSON's challenge to the Socinians it is not to my purpose to examine; and I need say nothing of the Holy Spirit, since all that CLARKE says is, that the same which is said of the second may be understood, very agreeably to right reason and with little variation, of the third.

THAT the account the bible gives of a paradisiacal state, of the loss of it by sin, and of the consequences of this loss, are exactly consonant to the dictates

dictates of found reason, * or the unprejudiced light of nature, and most wisely perfective of it (for thus far his undertaking goes) it behoved him to make out very clearly ; because if the redemption be, as he owns it is †, the main and fundamental article of the christian faith, sure I am, that the account of the fall of man is the foundation of this fundamental article. He should have laboured this point the rather, since it is, in all it's circumstances, absolutely irreconcileable to every idea we can frame of wisdom, justice, and goodness, to say nothing of the dignity of the Supreme Being, who is introduced so familiarly, and employed so indecently, in taking the cool air, in making coats of skins, to serve instead of aprons of fig leaves which ADAM and EVE had sewed together ; and not only in cursing the serpent, and them, and their whole posterity, and the world itself for their sakes, but in joking most cruelly on them ; for the twenty-second verse of the third chapter of Genesis is allowed to be an holy irony or sarcasm by that learned divine MATTHEW POOLE. Instead of proving any part of this to be agreeable to found reason, and the unprejudiced light of nature, CLARKE passes over the whole, as very reasonable and credible in itself ; which it appears to be, he says, not only from the abstract consideration of the nature of the thing, ‡ but also from the general opinion of the heathens, that the original state of man was innocent and simple, till God, for the

* Evid. p. 239. † Ib. p. 262. ‡ Ib. p. 255.

sins of men, changed this happy constitution of things. In the name of God, is this to prove? Do men, who prove no better, deserve an answer, how much reputation soever they may have acquired? Their adversaries deny, and have attempted to shew that this account of the fall of man is unreasonable and incredible, in every consideration, abstract, or particular. This champion in demonstration says, it is very reasonable and credible from the abstract consideration of the thing. He says no more. He begs the question, therefore, shamefully, on the very point in dispute, and which he undertook to maintain. The heathen, the most antient and learned of them, are again brought in to no purpose whatever; since if they had all agreed in some general and obscure tradition of this sort, it would avail little as to the reasonableness and credibility of this change in the constitution of things, and nothing as to the particular circumstances which are made the angular stones of the whole fabric of christianity. One cannot consider the use which CLARKE makes, so frequently, and to so little purpose, of the heathen philosophers, without laughing, as CALANUS, the doctor's voucher on this occasion, laughed at the dress of ONESICRITUS, when he bid him strip and lye down naked on the stones by him.* The mad gymnosophist had begun, whilst he laughed, to tell the messenger of ALEXANDER, as a sample of his wisdom, how fertile the world was in antient times, how the fountains ran with milk, with

* STRABO, Lib. xv,

water,

water, with honey, with wine, and with oil ; how JUPITER had destroyed this constitution of things * ; for the iniquity of men, who abused his goodness, and had obliged them to live by their labour ; how it had been restored again on their reformation ; and what danger there was, now they had relapsed into almost the same iniquity, that the end of all things should be at hand. He would have proceeded, no doubt, in much the same style, if MANDANIS, the head of the order, had not imposed silence on him, and calling ONESICRITUS to himself from CALANUS, had not talked with great decency and good sense, in a manner, and on subjects proper for the Greek to report to his prince. Thus the history of the fall, and all the circumstances of it are proved reasonable and probable.

XXXVII.

OUR author takes a little more pains to shew, that the doctrine of the redemption of mankind is agreeable to reason. Having assumed, which he calls proving, that the moral attributes of God, and the notions and expectations of some wise men among the heathens, make it reasonable to believe God did make, seventeen hundred years ago, a revelation of his will to mankind, as if mankind stood in more need of a revelation four thousand years after their race began, than at any other period ; as if the moral attributes of God

* . . . ob satietatem et luxuriam ad contumeliam se transdiderunt,

were not the same, four thousand years before, when he made the first revelation of his will in the constitution of nature ; and finally, as if the notions and expectations of **SOCRATES** and **PLATO**, supposing these philosophers to have had them really, proved any thing more than their desire of more knowledge than God thought proper to give them the means of acquiring ; having assumed all this, I say, he proceeds to argue in this manner*. “ Some sacrifice or expiation for sin was necessary to be appointed, to shew God’s inexpressible hatred to it. Repentance might not be sufficient. God would not be appeased without some punishment and satisfaction ; and yet he would accept some other than the destruction of offenders. This appears, in the custom of sacrificing, to have been the universal apprehension of mankind :” and, from this universal apprehension he concludes that “ the doctrine of the redemption is plainly agreeable to right reason.” Thus are these great masters of reason reduced to propose the most gross abuses for the true dictates of it. Thus are the most absurd notions which superstition ever spread, in contradiction to the law of nature and reason, applied to the proceedings of God with man ; made the measure of divine justice by philosophers, who determine and define the moral attributes of the deity ; and established as foundations of the christian system by divines, who pretend, and who are hired to defend it. Notions, which directed a

* Evid. p. 263, et seq.

principal part of idolatrous worship, are sanctified, and the most inhuman rites are rendered the most meritorious: for if it was agreeable to found reason to think that God would not be appeased unless some blood was spilled, he who shed that of beasts to expiate sins did well, but he who shed that of his children did better. He brought the punishment nearer to himself: and the Phenician had the advantage, in this respect, of the Israelite. He erred, whatever he sacrificed, by the misapplication of a true principle, when he sacrificed to MOLOCH. But the Israelite, who did not misapply the principle, would have pursued it more agreeably to sound reason, and the unprejudiced light of nature, if he had sacrificed his son, as ABRAHAM was ready to do, or his daughter, like JEPHTHAH. God was pleased to accept of an expiation that cost offenders less to make, under the mosaical dispensation, as the scriptures tell us. But the same scriptures prove evidently that the reason of the thing goes as far as I carry it; since, under the christian dispensation, God caused the expiation for sin to be made by the sufferings and death of his own Son; than which nothing can be imagined, as CLARKE * assures us, more honourable and worthy of the Supreme Lord and Governor of all things.

WE weigh these matters in the balance of human reason, to which the appeal is made, if men who decide can be said to appeal, even though they

* Ib. p. 268.

affirm that God condescends to do so. They are refuted, therefore, if they have not reason, as well as revelation, on their side: and the charge of weakening the cause of the latter, whilst they presume to defend it by the former, is made out against them. Let us proceed, therefore, with a due respect for revelation, and with no more than it deserves for their reasoning.

I SAY then, though we should allow men were in the right to think universally that God exacted some bloody expiation for sin, and that repentance, which the law of nature points out, was not sufficient, yet even this concession would not justify the doctrine of the redemption of mankind at the bar of reason. The heathens thought that the sacrifice of an ox, or a son, or a daughter, would atone for their sins. Therefore, it is plainly agreeable to the universal reason of mankind, signified by this universal apprehension, to believe that God sent his only begotten Son, who had not offended him, to be sacrificed by men, who had offended him, that he might expiate their sins, and satisfy his own anger. Surely our ideas of moral attributes will lead us to think that God would have been satisfied, more agreeably to his mercy and goodness, without any expiation, upon the repentance of the offenders, and more agreeably to his justice with any other expiation, rather than with this. The heathen divines were accustomed to think and speak of their gods much after the manner of men. If one of them, therefore, had arisen from

from the dead, he would have concurred readily with CLARKE in the maxim, that the moral attributes are the same in the divine nature, as they are in our ideas. But then he would have challenged the doctor to produce an example, in the pagan system, of a god sacrificing his son to appease himself, any more than of a god who was himself his own father and his own son. SATURN, he might say, did indeed offer up his son in sacrifice: but he did it to appease COELUS, not himself.

WHEN our divine is about to establish, "that there is a fitness and unfitness of certain circumstances to certain persons, founded in the nature of things, and in the qualifications of persons; he says, that this must be acknowledged by every one who will not affirm that it is equally fit . . . that an innocent being should be extremely and eternally miserable, as that it should be free from such misery." The proposition is true without dispute, though it is not true that we can always discern this fitness and unfitness. Let us join issue with the learned person here, and add, to strengthen the maxim, that there is the same unfitness, in the case supposed, whether the misery be assumed eternal, or not. Let us ask now, whether the truth of this maxim, the innocence of the Lamb of God, and the sufferings and ignominious death of CHRIST, can be reconciled together, and how? The nicest casuist would, I think, be puzzled: but our casuist goes on most dogmatically, and shews no more regard

to the dignity, than to the innocence, of the divine person who died on the cross. He does, indeed, allow that no one can certainly say that God might not have pardoned sin upon repentance without any sacrifice. But he pronounces this method of doing it, by the death of CHRIST, to be more wise and fit for several prudential reasons. Read them, they would appear futile and impertinent if applied to human counsels; but in their application to the divine counsels they become profane and impious. Nay, it would not be hard to shew that this method was more proper to produce a contrary effect, than that which is assigned as a reason for taking it. For instance, the death of CHRIST, it is said, was proper to discountenance presumption, and to discourage men from repeating their transgressions. Surely it would not be hard to shew by reason, that the death of CHRIST might, and by fact, that it has countenanced presumption without discouraging men from repeating their transgressions. But I shall not descend into particulars that are trifling and tedious, and that would render a full answer to them little better. A general reflection or two, may serve, and are as much as they all deserve.

Tho' I am far from approving the practice of those who compare so frequently the divine with the human oeconomy and policy, and who build on the last their hypothetical schemes of the first; yet on this occasion, and to frame an argument ad hominem, it may be properly done. Let us suppose

pose then a great prince governing a wicked and rebellious people. He has it in his power to punish, he thinks fit to pardon them. But he orders his only and beloved Son to be put to death to expiate their sins, and to satisfy his royal vengeance. Would this proceeding appear to the eye of reason, and in the unprejudiced light of nature, wise, or just, or good? No man dares to say that it would, except he be a divine: for CLARKE does in effect say that it would; since he imputes this very proceeding to God, and justifies it not implicitly on the authority of revelation, but explicitly on the authority of reason, which may be applied to man as well as to God, and as a particular instance of the general rule that is, according to him, common to both. Allow me one reflection more.

CLARKE acknowledges readily, that human reason could never have discovered such a method as this for the reconciliation of sinners to an offended God. But if reason could not have discovered it, how comes it to pass that reason finds no such difficulty nor inconceivableness in it, as to make a wise man call the truth of it in question? the truth of a well-attested revelation, he says. But here he plays the sophist. He is to prove the method agreeable to sound unprejudiced reason, independently of revelation. No matter how it came to be known, is it reasonable, is it agreeable to a fitness founded in the nature of things and in the qualifications of persons? This is the point to be considered. To consider it as reasonable re-

latively

latively to the revelation of it, is not to appeal to unprejudiced, but to prejudiced reason. It is in plain terms to beg the question shamefully. Heathen theology was licentious enough in all conscience. The professors of it gave an extravagant loose to their imaginations, passed all the bounds of probability, and scarce kept within those of conceivable possibility. Thus they came very near to such a system as this ; so near, that there was little more to be added : but this little, they did not think so highly of the human, and so lowly of the divine nature, as was necessary to make them add it. AESCULAPIUS came down from heaven, conversed in a visible form with men, and taught them the art of healing diseases. The passage is cited from JULIAN by CLARKE *, in order to shew, according to his laudable custom, that there is nothing in the christian system which we may not believe on grounds of reason, because there is nothing in it more incredible than what the least reasonable men that ever were, wild metaphysicians, heathens, heretics, apostates, have believed. It may be cited more properly to shew, what I mean to shew by it, how easy and short a transition might have been made by heathen divines, in the rage that possessed them all of framing complete schemes of the whole order and state of things, from a god teaching physic to a god teaching theology. The most ignorant and savage of them, like the Phenicians and the Carthaginians, who have been already mentioned, for they were all su-

* Ib. p. 268.

perstitious

perstitious alike, came a little nearer to the doctrine of redemption. But even they did not come up to it entirely. They meaneed to encourage the pious practice of sacrificing their children; for pious it was on the principle of expiation by shedding of blood: but there was a great difference between the conceptions they had of their gods, and those which Christians have of the Father and the Son. Their gods had been men, and SATURN was a man when he sacrificed his son. Their ideas of human government led them to notions of divine mediations, and of expiations by shedding of blood, which were so many particular redemptions. But nothing in the reason of the thing, nor in the most superstitious of their prejudices, could lead them to imagine so much rigor in one god, as to exact that another should be sacrificed even by men who meaneed no expiation, and in whom it was a murder, not a sacrifice; nor so much humility and condescension in another as to make him submit to be this divine victim. They could not imagine any thing so repugnant, as this, to all their ideas of order, of justice, of goodnes; and in short, of theism; tho' they imagined many other things that were really inconsistent with all these ideas. Those of them, therefore, who embraced this doctrine, after it had been revealed, embraced it, not because they found no difficulty nor inconceivableness in it, which CLARKE was to prove by proving it agreeable to sound reason, but merely because it was part of a revelation they believed true for reasons of another kind: which is

nothing to his purpose under this head of argument.

XXXVIII.

ALL that he says more, than I have observed, upon it; all that follows about the importance of this world of ours, which it is assumed was made for the sake of man, and which, we are told, is as considerable and worthy of the divine care as most other parts of our system, which is likewise as considerable as any other single system in the universe, in order to take off the objection arising from the meanness of the creature; and finally all that follows about the manifestations of God, and the discoveries of his will, supposed to have been made by the same divine Logos to other beings in other systems, in order to take off the imputation of partiality from the Creator; all this, I say, is a rhapsody of presumptuous reasoning, of profane absurdities disguised by epithets, of evasions that seem to answer whilst they only perplex, and, in one word, of the most arbitrary and least reasonable suppositions. I will bring but one instance more of the excellent manner in which the author of the Evidences proves that all things, necessary to be believed in order to salvation, or closely connected with these, are most agreeable to sound unprejudiced reason. He proposes * the objection drawn from the want of universality to the christian revelation. He had proposed it before out of the oracles of reason: and his answer in both places

* Evidences p. 215, 216, 217, et 273.

is the same. It had been urged that no revelations, no instituted religions, had been universally received at any time, and by all nations; and that christianity is in the same case with the rest; that the Son of God did not appear till the latter ages of the world; and that, since he did appear, his gospel has not been received universally, and even his appearance has not been known to a great number of nations. The doctor does not undertake to shew how men may receive the benefits of a revelation of which they never heard, tho' that seems to be his opinion: but he insists triumphantly, that the same objection will lye against natural religion; and boasts again that he can force the objector into absolute atheism. He boasts, like a bully who looks fierce, speaks big, and is little to be feared: for there is no sufficient parity between the two cases, and his reason is, on this occasion, as harmless as the other's sword. To affirm that natural and revealed religion are alike unknown in any parts of the world, is to affirm an untruth. That all men have not the same capacities and opportunities of understanding the obligations of natural religion, is true, but proves nothing.

Go to any of those people whom we call barbarous, and who seem of all human creatures to have improved their reason the least, you will find the light of nature, though not the light of the gospel, shining, faintly indeed, but shining among them; some rules of moral life, some laws for the main-

tainance of society, some awe and reverence of a Being superior to man, some reward for virtue, some punishment for vice. The religion of nature is known and improved more or less according to the different opportunities which men have, in proportion to their different capacities, and perhaps to the different degrees in which they participate of one common nature. But it is known and observed more or less every where. Nay, there has been often occasion to wish that the same moderation and innocence, which prevailed in ignorant nations, had been found in those who are more improved in learning and civility; and that the knowledge of virtue had been of greater advantage to natural religion than the ignorance of vice.*

Is this now the case of the christian religion? How many nations, civilised as well as barbarous, have there been, how many are there still, by whom these tidings of good news have been never heard, nor even the least rumour of them? How many others to whom they have been carried, and who have refused to hear them, or hearing to believe them? All the truths of natural religion are discoverable, it is allowed on all hands, by the due use of reason alone; and God has left them to be so discovered: for tho he has not given the same

* . . . Utinam reliquis mortalibus similis moderatio et abstinentia alieni foret. Tantum plus in illis proficit vitiorum ignoratio, quam in his (nempe Graecis cognitio virtutis.) JUS. TIN, lib. ii. cap. 2. speaking of the Scythians.

capacity to all men in any case, he has given the same means to all men in this case. If natural religion is discoverable by all men, revealed religion is so by none: and the divine must have very little regard to consistency, when he objects that God has not given to some the same capacity of making and improving this discovery, as he has given to others; since it is his own doctrine that in those countries, where christianity has been preached, some have believed and some have not believed, according to the different measures of grace, which is the free gift of God, bestowed upon them.

BUT to carry this matter beyond the power of sophism, and every polemical artifice; let us suppose whole nations as ignorant of natural religion as their bears and their wolves. Natural religion would be still the same, and of the same authority. It would be the religion of reasonable nature, and obligatory on all who had such a nature. One part of CLARKE's reasoning, which he supposes falsely to be alike applicable both to that and to the christian religion, would be well applied in favor of it. They who were endowed with rationality might say, with found reason and the unprejudiced light of nature on their side, " God is not obliged to make all his creatures, even all those that are in appearance of the same species, equal; and to assert that he is, would be a profane diminution of his sovereignty. Let us be thankful for the means he has given us of im-

“ proving our knowledge and our happiness,
“ That he has not given them to other creatures,
“ would be a strange reason for not improving
“ them ourselves.” They, who were not endowed
with so much rationality, would haye no more moral
obligations incumbent on them, than their bears
and their wolves. Is this plea now applicable to the
want of universality, objected to the christian re-
velation? It cannot be said without equal absurd-
ity and effronterie. But they, to whom the terms
of the christian religion were communicated,
might say, with sound reason and the unprejudiced
light of nature on their side, that these terms
would have been communicated to all mankind
alike, if the revelation had been from God; since
all mankind were alike obliged to them, and since
they, to whom these terms had not been commu-
nicated, would die, and might be damned, in their
involuntary ignorance of them. Thus their faith
would be shocked; or, if it was not, if they work-
ed out their salvation with fear and trembling, the
fate of the others would continue to be, what they
pronounced it, most undeservedly miserable.

THIS needs little explanation: but to prevent all cavil, and to shew with greater evidence how inconsequently CLARKE argues, and would argue, even if natural religion wanted universality as much, and in as absolute a manner, as he supposes, and as in fact the christian religion wants it, let us descend into a more particular comparison. In one case, then, God would have placed his human creatures

creatures in very different circumstances, indeed : but the religion of reason obliges us to think that his proceedings towards them would have been proportioned to these circumstances. In the other case, and according to the christian revelation, he has, for the sake of one man's offence, reduced all mankind to the same deplorable circumstances. It is true that he sent his Son, forty centuries afterwards, to redeem them from the consequences of this situation : but the condition was, that they believed in his Son ; " for there is no name under heaven by which we can be saved but the name of the man CHRIST JESUS." They are condemned without any fault of theirs : one sole and uniform condition of saving themselves is imposed on all of them, and the greatest part are deprived even of the knowledge of this condition. It will be said, perhaps, which has been hinted already, that as the death of CHRIST had a retroactive effect on those that lived and died before they were redeemed, so it may be beneficial to those who never heard of it since. But these are the hypotheses of theology and surmises of divines, not the express and clear doctrines of christianity. Nay, the divines, who held so charitable an opinion, would be opposed by other divines. St. THOMAS is pleased, notwithstanding this text, to save some of the heathens by a distinction between implicite and explicite faith, and by assuming that the first might be a saving faith to those who lived before the promulgation of the gospel. But he is not so gracious to those who have lived since that time;

Since the gospel was promulgated, nothing less than explicite faith will do: and he damns all those who have it not, whether they ever heard of CHRIST or no, most arbitrarily and most inconsistently. To conclude; there is no parity between the two cases. The first is agreeable to all our ideas of justice and goodness, as well as of sovereignty and order. But no subtlety whatever can reconcile the last to any ideas, except those of caprice, injustice, cruelty, and tyranny.

WHAT shall we say now? Is the cause of christianity too bad to be defended? Or is it defended booty? I think neither. I have too much respect for revelation to think one, and too much charity for the least charitable men alive to think the other. A presumptuous habit of reasoning, and the phrensy of metaphysics, are to be charged alone: It would pass for downright madness, if we were not accustomed to it, and if the practice of great and good men did not authorise it in common opinion, to hear a creature, placed in the lowest form of intelligent beings, undertake to penetrate the designs, to fathom the depths, and to unveil the mysteries of infinite wisdom, which the most exalted of created intelligences would adore in silence. When the tradition was recent, and the proofs irrefragable of all the facts on which the authority of christian revelation is, and can be alone properly founded, the fathers of the church might have stopped the mouths of all pretenders to reason, by refusing to reason about a revelation already proved to

to be divine; by insisting that every thing necessary to be known was clearly and fully revealed, and that mysteries were recorded to exercise our faith, not our speculations, nor our logic. If they had not gone off this rock, in compliance with the philosophical mode of the age, and with the vanity of their own hearts, they could not have been forced from it. But when they had once engaged in platonick and aristotelical reasonings about christian mysteries, it was too late to go back. They might cry as loudly as they pleased, which they always did when they were pinched, that the judgments and ways of God were acatalepta, incomprehensible; but this cry came with an ill grace from them. It could have no effect on their adversaries. They might have made it a cry of triumph. They made it little better than a confession of defeat: and such it has continued ever since.

XXXIX.

IF I intended to proceed any further than CLARKE leads me on this occasion, I might consider in many more instances, taken from the writings of other divines, and of the fathers of the church, the manner in which they employ reason to account for revelation, sometimes literally, sometimes allegorically, always presumptuously, often ridiculously. To collect all the profane nonsense that has been broached above Eve and the serpent, about the trees of life and knowledge, and about other circumstances of the creation and fall of

of man, which the curiosity of the woman, the wiles of the serpent, and the uxorious complaisance of ADAM effected, would be to collect an immense volume of all that has been writ on these subjects by Jews and Christians; for all that has been writ upon them is alike absurd. To run through all those passages of the Old Testament which are lessens of public and private immorality, of immodesty to women, and of sanguinary ferocity to men, which leave us no room to be surprised when we hear that there were certain heretics, who thought the God of the Old Testament was not the God of the New, and which shew that they who compiled the written law, from ESDRAS to SIMON the just, had as little discernment in the choice of their materials, as they who compiled the traditions of the oral law afterwards; both of which demonstrate that notions the most unworthy of God, and the most repugnant to the law of human nature, prevailed among the Jews in every age, though they were reconciled in their minds to some very sublime sentiments, and very true opinions: to run through all this, I say, would be not only tedious, but shocking to a man who considered these passages seriously, even to him, perhaps, who had heard them read solemnly a thousand times in his parish-church without being offended at them. Such is the force of habit, which familiarises the grossest absurdities to our reason, as it does the most disagreeable sensations to our senses.

TYPES, and figures, and prophecies are subjects on which the acute wits of divines have been much exercised, in order to shew a connection between the Old Testament and the New, and how one prepares us for and foretells the other, I shall descend into few particulars concerning them. There is no room for reasoning about the two former. Their propriety or impropriety, aptness or unaptness, must appear to the understanding as soon as they are compared with the things typified or figured. Thus for example, and to mention no other, when St. AUSTIN * tells us, that the ark being made of wood, and having a length, an heighth and breadth, which answer to the proportions of the human body, and, therefore, signify a human body, it is plain that this vessel prefigured the city of God, or the church, which is saved by that wood, on which the man JESUS CHRIST was hanged up; that his coming was foretold, and he came: the impropriety and unaptness of this type or figure must strike you on the very first reflection.

MORE reasoning and a longer process of examination are necessary when prophecies are concerned. The meaning of them is always equivocal and obscure: and it may be doubtful sometimes whether

* Mensura ipsa longitudinis, altitudinis, latitudinisque ejus significat corpus humanum . . . quae fit salva per lignum in quo pependit . . . homo JESUS CHRISTUS. Praenunciatus est venturus, et venit. De civ. Dei, lib. xv.

things were done, or recorded to be done, because they had been, or seemed to have been, foretold; or whether they had been foretold because they were to come to pass. Of prophecies we have store, both of such as are applied to the Messiah, of such as foretold what was to happen immediately to him, and to Jerusalem, and of such as remain, and must remain, till the consummation of all things, unaccomplished. I shall not set my feet into this labyrinth, where nothing certain is to be found, and from whence it is not easy to get out. I shall be content to observe, that many questions are unresolved, many difficulties unremoved, concerning the first kind of prophecies; and that men, even inspired men, have thought sometimes that they discovered prophecies, when they made them, and made them such as could not be maintained with all the learning and all the subtilty they have bestowed about them. It was for this reason, I suppose, that CLARKE omitted modestly the famous prophecy, "a virgin shall conceive and bear a son," in the place where he enumerates those that foretold the Messiah; tho' he was sanguine enough to insist on some of no less difficult application, as that "the sceptre shall not depart from Judah till SHILOH comes;" and on others that have had no accomplishment, as that in the Psalms, that God would "give him the heathen for his inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for his possession," which is become by the event more applicable to FOE or MAHOMET, than to the true Messiah.

It may not be out of our way to observe here, that as the vague undetermined sense, and the ambiguous dark expression, of the Bible have led sacred writers and others to suppose prophecies, applicable to CHRIST, where none such were intended; so the mahometan doctors have taken this advantage to assume that their false prophet is plainly promised, both in the old and new covenant. They quote the text in Deuteronomy, where it is said, that the Lord came, or manifested himself, from Sinai, and rose up from Seir,* that he shined forth from mount Paran. In this passage they find the law given to Moses, the gospel to JESUS CHRIST, and the koran to MAHOMET: and this they support by topographical proofs. Seir is, according to them, that extent of hills which run from the Red to the Dead Sea, close to Jerusalem. Paran is that mountain in the desert of Arabia, near to Mecca, where MAHOMET received the first chapters of his impertinent book. I wonder these commentators have not observed further, that from the Lord's right hand there went a fiery law for them. This epithet could never be more properly applied. Your HOMER alludes to fire in his descriptions of battles. The devastations of war are compared by other poets to those of fire; and the mahometan law might be called fiery at least, as well as the mosaical. These doctors bring two other quotations from the Psalms. The first is, in our translation, "Out of

* Chap. xxxii. ver. 2,

" Zion

“ Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has shined.”^{**}
 In the syriac, they say, it is, “ God hath made a
 “ crown of glory to shine out of Zion;” and they
 add, that the words, rendered “ crown of glory,”
 are in the original hilan mahmudan, by which
 the passage would be made to signify, God has sent
 the domination of MAHOMET with splendor out of
 Zion. The second is taken from the Psalm which
 is called the Psalm of SOLOMON, † and which de-
 scribes in the future tense all the glories of his reign.
 This our divines agree to be so; but, having as-
 sumed, no one knows why, that SOLOMON was a
 type of the Messiah, they assert that the pro-
 phesy looks forward to the spiritual reign of
 CHRIST, and that sometimes one and sometimes
 the other is meant, with a strange confusion of
 images. The mahometan doctors fix the sense of
 it by asserting, against Jews and Christians both,
 that the arabic version employs the proper and
 usual word Medina, where it is said, that they of
 the city shall flourish like grass of the earth: after
 which they ask, with an air of triumph, what other prophet, besides MAHOMET, ever came out
 of Medina, or even of Arabia? They go fur-
 ther, and they assume that CHRIST himself fore-
 told the coming of MAHOMET, when he said, that,
 if he did not go, the Paraclet would not come;
 but that when he did go, he would send him ‡.
 They pretend that this passage was still more ho-
 nourable for their prophet; that CHRIST spoke of
 himself in it as of the precursor of MAHOMET, and

that it has been corrupted. But still the prophecy, they say, is sufficiently clear, since Paraclet is in arabic Ahmed, and since Ahmed or Mahammed are the same.

ALL, that has been said concerning attempts to explain and enforce revelation by reason, relates to internal proofs, as they are called, of the divine original of the scriptures. CLARKE, whom I follow, does not think fit to insist on any external proofs, on such as might establish beyond all reasonable doubt the antiquity, the genuineness, and the authority of the books themselves: * and yet the least pain of such proof as this would outweigh all the volumes of problematical and futile reasoning, that had been so tediously employed to give some colour to the other. He refers us indeed to the collection that we find in GROTIUS †, of many particulars contained in sacred, and confirmed by profane history. But GROTIUS and he should have seen that every one else would see the fallacy of this pretended proof. The concurrent testimony of cotemporary, disinterested, and unprejudiced authors is, no doubt, a principal foundation of the credibility of any history: and such a testimony these men would have it thought that they produce, when they quote, with much pomp, egyptian, phenician, chaldean, indian, and greek traditions and histories. But none of these were of such authority; or if the most ancient of them, such as SANCHONIATHON for instance, and

* Evid. p. 259.

† De verit. rel. christ.

even others more modern, like BEROSUS, or ABYDENUS, or ERATOSTHENES, or MANETHO, were disinterested and unprejudiced in their history and chronology; yet it is certain that they, by whom alone these testimonies are conveyed to us, were so little of that character, JOSEPHUS and EUSEBIUS for instance, that their design in writing, however they blundered sometimes in the execution of it, was to make profane chronology and history appear conformable to those of the Bible at any rate. That they did so, every scholar knows, in some instances which make their authority justly precarious in every instance of this kind. But I am willing to suppose that these impure channels are pure, and that they have conveyed these anecdotes down to us just as they stood in the antient books, from which they are said to be taken. What will this concession prove? It will prove that there were various traditions, in a most remote antiquity, concerning the creation, the flood, and the destruction of Sodom, about ABRAHAM and other patriarchs, about DAVID, and other kings of the Jews. It will shew that the Phenicians, the Egyptians, the Israelites, and probably every one of the eastern nations, had their systems of traditions, whereof that of the Old Testament alone is come down to us entire. The same names, and many circumstances of the same events, must of course have been mentioned in all. But such a conformity proves nothing. As they agreed in some, they might differ in other particulars: and the whole tenor of those, that are

are lost, might be repugnant to one another, and to that of the Jews. ABRAHAM was a name famous in all of them. ISAAC was known to the Arabians as well as ISMAEL; and ISMAEL to the Jews as well as ISAAC: but they tell very different stories about the legitimacy, and rank, and favour with God, of the two brothers, as well as about the descent from them. In one of these, we find a genealogy down to CHRIST. In the other the Mahometans find a genealogy of all those who were born with the signs of a prophet down to MAHOMET. I could set the fallacy of this sort of proof, in general and in particular, as it is applied both to the Old Testament and to the New, in a stronger light; if I did not hasten back from this digression to that which is more immediately my subject, in order to shew you a further abuse of this manner of reasoning, on which the absurd pile of artificial theology has been erected, and is supported. The abuse, I mean, is that whereby divines admit the first, the most plausible, and the strongest objection that atheism ever made to the existence of God; form a sort of partial alliance with the professors of it, and assist them in undermining the fundamental article of all religion, which they hope vainly to maintain afterwards by the help of a few hypothetical props. This abuse does not arise solely from the presumption which has been spoken of, the presumption of those who think that the christian revelation wants to lean on human reason, and to be explained and enforced by it; but from a false reasoning, in which

philosophers have indulged their pride, and their curiosity, ever since there was such a thing as philosophy in the world. Let us descend into a particular consideration of this matter, and speak of it a little at large.

XL.

AFTER pleading the cause of natural and revealed religion, I am now to plead that of God himself, if I may use the expression of SENECA in his treatise *De providentia*, against divines and atheists in confederacy.

THAT chain of reasoning, by which we arrive, from a knowledge of the phaenomena, at a knowledge of the author of nature, of a first intelligent cause of all things, self-existent and the fountain of all existence, all-perfect, and the inimitable original of all perfections, has never been, and can never be, broken. How should reason dissolve a demonstration reason has made by leading us from things perceived by sense and by intuition to that existence which cannot be so perceived?* The atheist cannot be said properly to argue against the most evident, and in my apprehension the most comfortable, truth, which human reason demonstrates. All he can do is to cavil at it: and thus far the association, between him and the theist, has been carried too generally in all ages.

* Ratio quae ex rebus perceptis ad id quod non percipiebatur inducit. Acad. quæst. L. ii.

IGNORANCE that was real, and knowledge that was fantastic, superstition, and philosophy combined to create gods, whose existence could not be demonstrated. But these gods, these hypothetical deities, did not interfere with the one Supreme Being, even in the minds of those who worshipped them: “*a rebus physicis tracta ratio ad commen-
titios et fictos deos.*” These were the most ancient, and, like the sun, the first and principal, objects of adoration. They were the *dii majorum gentium*. But they were visible and generated gods, as they are called by PLATO: and however confusedly this appellation was employed in common use, the *εθεοί* were always distinguished from *εθεοί* and *τὸ θεῖον*. The Timaeus distinguishes them sufficiently; and PROCLUS, in his comment upon it, where he mentions the doubts and disputes that arose about the many, affirms that the belief of one God was uniform. Even they who believed some, of the many, eternal, believed them so by an eternal creation or procession from the one; and if equal in time, yet not so in the order of nature and causality, nor self-existent. CELSUS was a strenuous polytheist, and yet, when he pleaded for the worship of demons, he asserted, “ that the one true God is never to be neglected, “ neither by day nor night, neither in public nor “ private, neither in words nor actions; but that “ our minds ought to be directed constantly to “ him.” In short, when the pagan theists were called upon to explain themselves, they made a

profession of their faith easily reconciled to true theism: and the fathers of the church, who rejected, like EUSEBIUS, these professions as those of men who only denied what they were shamed from owning by christianity, had a very ill grace; since they themselves were every day employed to explain and alter old doctrines by new, and were nursing up a sort of polytheism, which became little different from that of the pagans, and which needs, at this hour, as much indulgence to make it pass for any thing else.

THAT there were some men, who knew not God, in all ages, may be true; but the scandalous task of combating his existence, under the mask of theism, was reserved for metaphysicians and theologians. It was undertaken probably as soon as philosophers, who professed such sciences, arose. It was undertaken certainly in an unknown antiquity; for as early as the most antient, and especially the most learned, nations appear to us, we see such doctrines and institutions established as owe plainly their original to objections raised against the proceedings of divine providence. What were the OSIRIS and TYPHO of the Egyptians, the OROMAZES and ARIMANIUS of the magi, the good and bad planets of the Chaldaens, the Zeus and Hades of the Greeks, the Monas and Dyas of PYTHAGORAS, the concord and discord, or two principles, of other philosophers; what were all these but so many inventions, piously designed to account for the mixture of good and evil, that there

there is in the world? To account for the supposed unjust distribution of them, other expedients had been found. Besides a metempsychosis, or transmigration of souls from the bodies of men into those of birds, beasts, fishes, and after a revolution of many ages into the bodies of men again, the Egyptians held an heaven and an hell, into one of which the good were to be received and to live with the gods, whilst the wicked were tormented in the other. PYTHAGORAS and PLATO had learned this doctrine from them.* But the former thought to give it more weight by pretending to have gone in person to the infernal shades: and the latter quoted, for the same purpose, HERES of Pamphilia, who had been sent from thence to relate what he had seen and heard there. It is worth while to mention the particulars related by him, in order to shew how much the antient atheists were persuaded that nothing less, than the existence of all mankind in a future state, and a more exact distribution of rewards and punishments, could excuse the assumed irregular and unjust proceedings of providence in this life, on which atheists founded an objection that the others admitted too easily. AEACUS, then, and MINOS and RHADAMANTHUS sat in judgment in the field of truth, "in campo veritatis." All the souls of the dead were brought before this tribunal. There they were tried, and the separation of the righteous from the wicked was made. The former were placed on the right hand, the latter on

* PLATO De rep. l. x.

the left: the former went upwards to live with the gods in heaven, the latter downwards to live with the furies in hell. Of these, however, a distinction was made. Such souls as were judged curable, and required only a little more purification, the *animae fanabiles*, were delivered from hell after a year of suffering; and for this purpose a review of souls was made annually. Let me observe, by the way, that the doctrine of purgatory is plainly proved by this doctrine, according to CLARKE's way of proving, and better than by a passage in one of the books of the Maccabees, to be agreeable to sound reason and the unprejudiced light of nature, in general: and that the particular circumstance of an annual review of souls favours extremely a fact which the franciscan monks asserted, and the council of Basle censured, the annual descent of their founder into purgatory; from whence he delivered, by a special privilege, and carried with him to heaven, the souls of all those of his own order.* What use may be made of these observations, I leave it to you to determine. But, I think, you will agree with me on the whole, that the cavils raised, on account of physical and moral evil, are as old as metaphysics and theology.

THEY, who arrived by proofs *a posteriori* at a demonstration of God's existence, might think very rationally that whatever discoveries they made

* *Beatus FRANCISCUS ex divino privilegio quotannis ad purgatorium descendit, suoique omnes ad coelum ducit.* SPOND, p. 141.

further

further concerning his nature, his attributes, and his will, must be made by the same means; and that what could not be so discovered, could not be discovered at all. Thus men of common sense might think: and by proceeding in this method they might be sure of acquiring as much knowledge as they wanted, and be safe against falling into error; since to proceed in this method is to follow natural revelation, and, instead of employing our reason about the suggestions of imagination, to employ her about those of nature, which are the suggestions of God himself. But we may be assured that there were in those days, as there are in ours, men of uncommon sense, who, setting themselves far above the vulgar, proceeded on a very vulgar principle, and made themselves the measure of all Being, of the Supreme Being among the rest. When modern divines tell us that we are made after the image of God, they mean it with a regard to our intellectual system: and they proceed in the very same manner with those ancient divines who made God after their own image. To say the first is more decent, but the last is always done; for there can be no application from God, whom we do not know, to man. The application must be made, and it always is so, from man, whom we do know, to God.

WHEN we contemplate the works of God
 cum suspicimus magni coelestia mundi
 Templa super, stellisque micantibus aethera fixum,
 Et venit in mentem lunae solisque viarum;

they give us very clear and determined ideas of wisdom and power, which we call infinite, because they pass, in the exercise of them, all the bounds of our conceptions. Thus far the reasoner a posteriori went formerly, and goes now; because the phaenomena conduct him thus far, and give him these ideas with an invariable uniformity. But the reasoners a priori have been never thus confined. As soon as they had proved to themselves the existence of a first intelligent cause of all things, which can be proved by the other method alone, they abandoned it: and having assumed that divine and human intelligence are the same, in kind at least, they proceeded in all their reasonings about the nature, moral attributes, and will of God, not only without regard to the phaenomena, but often in direct contradiction to them. In short, no true theist ever asserted, with greater assurance, this undeniably truth, that every thing, which God has done, is for that very reason right, than these false theists have asserted the repugnancy of many things, in the constitution and government of the world, to the moral attributes, and even to the wisdom, of God. God is, in their notion of him, nothing more than an infinite man. He knows as we know, is wise as we are wise, and moral as we are moral; but his knowledge, his wisdom, and his morality are in their nature infinite, tho' they are not exercised alike, nor with a constant harmony, nor consistency, in the production of all the phaenomena.

XL.

NO man has been more dogmatical on this head than CLARKE*. He is much scandalised at those theists, among others, who being so absurd as to imagine that goodness and justice are not the same in God, which they are in our ideas, but something transcendent, think it is impossible we should argue with any certainty about them. This opinion, he says, does not stand on any consistent principles, and must finally recur to absolute atheism. Now I own very freely, that the opinion is mine, and that it is one of those which I think it impious to alter, “quæ deserit a me, dum quidem spirare potero, “nefas judico.” Far from apprehending that I shall be reduced to atheism by holding it, the doctor seems to me in some danger of being reduced to manifest absurdity by holding the contrary opinion.

AFTER repeating, over and over, of all the moral attributes, that they are the same in God as they are in our ideas: and that he, who denies them to be so, may as well deny the divine physical attributes; the doctor insists only on two of the former, on those of justice and goodness. He was much in the right, to contract the generality of his assertion. The absurdity of ascribing temperance for instance, or fortitude, to God, would

* Evid. p. 26.

have

have been too gross, and too visible even to eyes that prejudice had blinded the most, But that of ascribing justice and goodness to him according to our notions of them, might be better covered, and was enough for his purpose, though not less really absurd.

“ If justice and goodness be not the same in God as in our ideas *, then we mean nothing when we say that God is necessarily just and good: and for the same reason, it may as well be said, that we know not what we mean, when we affirm that he is an intelligent and wise Being.” These are the doctor’s own words: and surely they shew that great men in common estimation are sometimes great triflers. When they, who are of his opinion, affirm that God is necessarily just and good, according to their precise notions of justice and goodness, they know indeed what they mean, and they mean very presumptuously. When they, who are not of his opinion, say that God is just and good, they too have a meaning which is not less reasonable for being more modest. They ascribe all conceivable perfections to God, moral and physical, which can belong to a divine nature and to a Supreme Being: but they do not presume to limit them to their conceptions, which is their crime with doctor CLARKE. Every thing shews the wisdom and power of God, conformably to our ideas of wisdom and power, in the physical

* Evid. p. 26.

world and in the moral. But every thing does not shew, in like manner, the justice and goodness of God, conformably to our ideas of these attributes in either. The physical attributes, are in their nature more glaring, and less equivocal. The divine and the atheist, therefore, deny that to be just or good, which is not one or the other according to their ideas. The theist acknowledges whatever God has done to be just and good in itself, though it does not appear such in every instance, conformably to his ideas of justice and goodness. He imputes the difference to the defect of his ideas, and not to any defect of the divine attributes. Where he sees them, he owns them explicitely: where he does not see them, he pronounces nothing about them. He is as far from denying them, as he is from denying the wisdom and power of God. In every case he knows what he means, and his meaning is in every case rational, pious, and modest.

WILL the divine say, that he does not deny the justice and goodness of God, because he proves them, in general, *a priori*; and that when he denies them in particular instances, he only denies the complete exercise of them in this world, because that is reserved for another? When he proves then the justice and goodness of God, he proves them as he could not prove even his intelligence, that is *a priori*: and when he denies them, his denial is absolute; unless an hypothesis, which may be denied on much better grounds,

for

for we speak here of reason, not of revelation, be true. But what is this proof *a priori*? Does it prove that justice and goodness, though they are so connected with the physical attributes, that when we ascribe one we are obliged, by necessary consequence, to ascribe the other to the Supreme Being, are yet so distinct that they may be separated in the exercise of them, and that either of them may act as independently of his wisdom, as of one another? If this be said, they who say it may assume, in consequence, that the Supreme Being is sometimes partial, instead of being always just, and sometimes evil, instead of being always good; which hypothesis might have saved the antients the trouble of inventing that of the two principles, and sets the reasoning of such a divine as CLARKE on principles as little consistent as that of an atheist. Does the argument *a priori* prove that the justice, and goodness, and wisdom, and power of God are so intimately connected, and are so much the same by nature, that they cannot be separated in the exercise of them? In this case, his natural attributes absorb the moral. The will of God is not determined, sometimes by one moral attribute, and sometimes by another, like that of man; but by a concurrence of them all with his wisdom, in every act of it. God is then infinitely wise: he does always that which is fittest to be done. That, which is fittest to be done, is always just and good, and the dispute is over.

No, says the divine. However you distinguish, or however you blend the divine attributes, there

is a rule, according to which the exercise of these attributes is determined, and must be characterised. This rule is the reason of things, resulting from their eternal relations, which are such as they appear to be to the understandings of all intelligent beings. God appeals to this rule; we have a right to judge him by it: and therefore, when he appears neither just nor good a posteriori, tho' we know him to be so a priori, we must have recourse to some hypothesis or other, in order to reconcile the exercise of his attributes to this rule.

“*Quo teneam protea nodo?*” It is hard to follow men, from supposition to supposition, through all the mazes of metaphysical theology. There is no end of it neither: and if I shewed CLARKE, that the understandings of all mankind, his own among the rest, are extremely apt to understand things to be what they are not, that they are imperfect and depraved, and that his rule * of judging God by man is, therefore, to the last degree impertinent, on this account, as well as on many others; if all this was shewn, I say, it would not serve to silence men, who seek nothing more than to maintain the honour of the gown by having the last word in every dispute. We shall do better, therefore, to go as far back as we can to the origin of this dispute, where we shall find, if I mistake not, that as it is carried on, so it was founded, on a previous question or two, miserably begged on one side, and as foolishly granted on the other.

* *Dem.* p. 125.

THE argument, by which EPICURUS endeavoured to prove that there could be no God, since there was such a thing as evil in the world, is stated more strongly, than it is refuted, by LACTANTIUS in his book *De ira Dei*. AUL. GELLIUS quotes a passage of Q. CLAUDIUS the annalist, wherein the gods are condemned for the iniquitous distribution of good and evil: * and PLUTARCH introduces his dialogue, concerning the delay of divine justice in punishing the crimes of men, by supposing that EPICURUS, who was just gone out of the company, had poured forth a whole torrent of blasphemy against the providence of God for this delay. In the third book of the nature of the gods, all the powers of eloquence are called forth, in a sprightly declamation, to exaggerate physical and moral evil, and to conclude as directly, as an academician could conclude, from their existence and from the assumed unjust dispensations of providence, that there is no God. These instances, to which I refer you, are sufficient. They are antient themselves, and they are the copies of others much more antient. But as bold as the charge is, and as high as it was founded, the belief of God's existence could not have been shaken by it in the minds of men, nor could they have been reduced, as they have been from the most early ages, to defend a demonstrated truth

* *Haec maxime versatur deorum iniquitas, quod deteriores fint incolumiores; neque optimum quempiam inter nos finunt diurnare.* L. xvii. c. 2.

by evasions, by sophisms, by hypotheses, and by all the low expedients that are employed to palliate error, if theists had not been seduced many ways into a confederacy with atheists.

THE case before us affords a signal example, the most signal that it is possible to imagine, of the danger we run, whenever we soar, in the vague of abstract reasoning, too far from the phaenomena of our system. To be real, our knowledge must rise in it. To be useful, it must be applicable to it. But philosophers appear often, like comets, that rise out of our system, just cross it, disorder it, and go out of it again. The general observation has been inculcated throughout all I have written; and it has been just now applied particularly to the proceeding of those reasoners *a priori*, who either became atheists themselves, or who supported the cavils of those who were such, till these cavils became arguments founded on theistical principles, and therefore difficult, I might say impossible, for those, who had established these principles, to answer. A self-existent Being, the first cause of all things, infinitely powerful, and infinitely wise, is the God of natural theology: and we may advance, without any fear of being disproved, that as the whole system of the universe bears testimony to this great truth, so the whole system of natural religion rests on it, and requires no broader foundation. These systems are God's systems. That of our knowledge is given and limited, that of our duty is prescribed and revealed,

vealed, by him. Both are adequate to one another; both are commensurate: we have no knowledge beyond our duty, nor any duty beyond our knowledge.

WHAT now has artificial theology pretended to add to that knowledge of the deity, which natural theology communicates? It pretends to connect, by very problematical reasonings *a priori*, moral attributes, such as we conceive them, and such as they are relatively to us, with the physical attributes of God; though there be no sufficient foundation for this proceeding in the phaenomena of nature: nay, though the phaenomena are, as it has been said already, in several cases repugnant. God is just, and good, and righteous, and holy, as well as powerful and wise. Man is made in the image of God: he is little lower than the angels, or inferior gods in the platonick scheme. Nay, he is superior to them: there is no intermediate being between God and man in the stoical scheme. “*Homini praestare quis possit nisi Deus?*” was the question of CHRYSIPPUS: and SENECA assumes a friendship, a necessary relation, a likeness, between God and good men. The good man is the disciple of God; he emulates God; he is the true offspring of God.*

SUCH were the notions of antient theists, and on such notions it was natural for them to assume

* *Amicitia est imo etiam necessitudo et similitudo discipulus ejus, aemulatorque, et vera progenies.* De provid.

that

that this world was made for man; and that the Supreme Being could have no other motive to make so noble a creature, except that of communicating happiness to him. The atheists saw their advantage. They saw that artificial theology gave them the means of unravelling that thread which natural theology had spun, and of playing the assumed, against the demonstrated attributes. They might ask, as they did, if God be good and holy, how comes it that there is any such thing as evil in the world? If he be just and righteous, how comes it that the best men have often the greatest share of this evil? The pagan theists were extremely puzzled how to answer these questions so as to prevent the conclusion, there is no God: and therefore they had recourse generally to the hypothesis of two co-existing principles; and thought, like PLUTARCH,* that it was better to abridge the power of JUPITER, than to impute to him that he caused or suffered evil. When they had not this recourse, they talked mere nonsense, figurative, sublime, metaphysical; but nonsense still. The Stoics, those zealous assertors of the Supreme God, and defenders of his providence, had all a tang of enthusiasm, or they all affected it. DEMETRIUS was of the first sort, no doubt: and so might SENeca be, who quotes him, and who took much pains to work himself, and his friend LUCILIUS, up to the same temper of mind. At least his treatise about providence is a rhapsody of paradox and

* *Adv. stoicos.*

enthusiasm, ingenious, affecting, and little to the purpose. I have quoted LACTANTIUS* for the argument of EPICURUS. I might quote him for such an answer to it as deserves to have it's place among the unexpected sayings, the *inopinata*, of the Stoics, and no where else. God can, but he will not, according to this father, take away the evil that is in the world; because if we did not know evil, we could not know good “ *nisi prius malum agnoverimus, nec bonum poterimus agnoscere:*” and because there is much more advantage and pleasure in the enjoyment of that wisdom by which alone we know the latter, than there is trouble and pain in the evil we suffer. “ *Plus boni ac jucunditatis in sapientia, quam in malis molestiae.*” Thus the father proves that all things were made for the sake of man, evil as well as good. “ *Constat igitur omnia propter hominem proposita, tam mala, quam etiam bona.*”

THAT man is the final cause of the whole creation, and that God could have no other motive to make him, except that of communicating happiness to him, are propositions assumed by all the antient and modern theists, those of paganism and those of christianity. Love was the first or chief of the gods. Love was the first principle of things. Love of his creatures in idea determined God to draw them forth into existence. That God loves us even to fondness, “ *usque in delicias amamur,*” would such a writer, as SENECA, say. That God

* *De ira Dei.* c. 13. † *SEN.* *De benef.* l. iv.

loves us heartily, is the language of such a writer as CLARKE. Such assumptions as have been mentioned, founded on such notions as these, were inculcated in all ages by artificial theology: and could not fail to be so with success; because they flattered human nature, who is besides her own flatterer and seducer, “blanda adulatrix et quasi “lena sui.” The production of infinite power were confined long to the system of one planet alone, and the exercise of infinite wisdom to the affairs of one animal chiefly. When further discoveries opened by degrees a more noble view of the universe, and experience and reflection obliged men to think, on many occasions, a little more modestly of their own importance; if physics mortified them, metaphysics raised their spirits again. Fantastic knowledge became as indulgent to self-love, and to the pride of the human heart, as real ignorance had ever been: and although some of the puerilities and superstitions, which had prevailed in the nonage of philosophy, were laid aside, yet some of these, and other opinions as extravagant and as inconsistent as these, were taught in the schools of theology. They who came theists, and they who came atheists, out of these schools, triumphed equally: the former, in those doctrines that raised very nearly the human up to the divine nature; the latter, in those that debased the divine moral character of God as low as human ideas of moral perfections. Theology furnished arms on both sides. The theist confirmed men in the belief of a Supreme Being, and set their passions on

his side, when he represented the predilection of this Being for them, who were alone, or in common with the generated gods, the final cause of the whole creation, and who were made to exist, that there might be rational and proper objects of God's munificence in the world. The atheist proceeded, on the same theistical principles, to shake this belief of a Supreme Being. That they must be true, if there was such a Being, he asserted as loudly as the divine. But he worked himself up to doubt, and he set, in his turn, the passions of men on his side, by declaiming pathetically against the physical and moral evil that abounds in the world ; by censuring the dispensations of providence in it, and by shewing that many of the phenomena are not reconcileable to our ideas of holiness, of goodness, of justice, and at the same time of wisdom and power. He came at last to deny that there was any God ; because he could not discover such a metaphysical and moral god as artificial theology had imagined.

THE arguments of the atheist were so strong ad hominem, for they are such in no other manner, that the theist found himself obliged to seek the usual refuge of philosophers who affect to dogmatise beyond their knowledge, and even beyond all their real, their clear, and well determined ideas ; the refuge, I mean, of hypotheses, by which they endeavour to evade what they cannot answer. That of two principles was the refuge of pagans from time immemorial, and of a famous set of heretics

heretics in the christian church. That of the fall of man, and of the continued malice of the first tempter, the old serpent, who caused it, was the refuge of orthodox christians. By these they hoped to account for the introduction of physical and moral evil, consistently with the propositions assumed, "that the world was made for man, and "man to be happy in it." By the hypothesis of a future state of rewards and punishments, both pagans and christians hoped to reconcile the dispensations of providence in this life, to the moral attributes of God, and to the rule of his conduct, which they assumed likewise to be the same in him, as they are in human ideas.

THE hypothesis of two principles, self-existing, infinite, opposite, is full of absurdities. But abstract it from these, and consider it only as it accounts for the introduction of evil, and it will appear much more plausible, tho' it be not more reasonable, than that of the fall of ADAM, and the malice of the devil. The first saves, or seems to save, all the attributes of the good God. They all exist in him, as the theist conceives them. They are all exerted by him, as the theist assumes. But he is opposed by a coequal bad principle: and that mixture of good and evil, which appears in the frame and government of the world, arises from the perpetual struggle of these rival powers. The last is full of absurdities likewise: but abstract it from these, and still you will find that it saves the divine attributes in no respect. It answers no pur-

pose in opposition to atheism ; and it could be so applied in good earnest, whatever other purpose it has been made to answer, by no theists who understood their own hypothesis, and the objections of their adversaries. The goodness, and even the wisdom, of God lye just as much exposed for suffering an inferior being, his creature and a creature in actual rebellion, to baffle the designs it is assumed that he had, as they would lye, if these designs were acknowledged to have been imperfectly executed by him. The severity with which he punished our first parents for a fault, which he foreknew that they would commit when he abandoned their free will to the temptation of committing it, for there would be too much horror in supposing them predestinated to commit the fault; this severity, I say, and much more that which has been exercised on the whole race of mankind, who share the punishment, tho' they had no share in the crime, cannot be reconciled to our ideas of justice. The introduction of physical and moral evil, therefore, could not be imputed more really to the Supreme Being independently of this hypothesis, than he is made the author of them by it, with the aggravating circumstance of punishing the innocent for what he permitted, in one sence of the word, the guilty to do.

XLII.

THE dispensations of providence, in the distribution of good and evil, stand in no need of any hypothesis to justify them: and if they did, that of a future state of rewards and punishments would be insufficient. These two propositions may be made, I think, very evident: and I shall endeavour to make them so, before I quit the subject. Reason will neither deny, nor affirm, that there is to be a future state: and the doctrine of rewards and punishments in it has so great a tendency to enforce civil laws, and to restrain the vices of men, that reason, who cannot decide for it, on principles of natural theology, will not decide against it, on principles of good policy. Let this doctrine rest on the authority of revelation. A theist, who does not believe the revelation, can have no objection to the doctrine in general. But even a theist, who does believe the revelation, may refuse to admit the doctrine on the principles on which it is established by divines, and may disapprove the use they make of it in several respects.

THE hypotheses, that have been crayoned out, are the chief pillars of artificial theology. Some of them were assumed in compliance with the overweening notions of their own worth and importance, which men are prone to entertain, and by which they raise themselves up to the imaginary heights that have been mentioned: tho' the

distance between our friend GAY's fly, in his fables, and the infinite self-existent Being, is not a whit greater than that between this Being and SOCRATES or St. PAUL, the two apostles of the gentiles. Other hypotheses were invented to maintain these: and by tagging one hypothesis to another, men deviated at last so far from natural theology, and raised so much confusion in their notions about it, that they had no means left of returning to the first principle of this theology, nor of clearing to common apprehension a little of this confusion, but those of another hypothesis. Strange effect of theological skill! It makes a demonstrated truth depend on a precarious supposition. If there is not a future state, God is neither good nor just according to our ideas of goodness and justice, in his dispensations. If he is not good and just, according to our ideas of these moral attributes, neither can the physical attributes, such as infinite wisdom and power, belong to him: and a being, who has none of these, is not God. But there is a future state. Thus divines have dared to argue: and I am justified in saying, that they betray the cause of God to the atheist, when they join with him in so many points, that nothing remains to be opposed to him, in defence of God's existence, but the problematical and futile reasonings they employ to prove a future state,

WE are apt to carry the judgments we make into extremes, and the characters we give into pane-

panegyrics or satires. The examples of this kind are without number: but none are so remarkable as those, which we find in writers, antient and modern, concerning the human nature. No creature is so miserable, in some descriptions, nor so necessitous, as man. He comes into the world bemoaning his fate. He grows up, and passes through the human state, exposed to many wants and bodily infirmities, unknown to the brute creation. You remember, no doubt, those fine verses in *LUCRETIUS* *:

Tum porro puer, ut saevis projectus ab undis
 Navita, nudus humi jacet infans, indigus omni
 Vitali auxilio.
 Vagituque locum lugubri complet, ut aequum est
 Cui tantum in vita restet transire malorum.
 At variae crescunt pecudes et.

No creature is to be compared with man in other descriptions, and in a contrary sense. He was made of earth; but this earth was impregnated with celestial seeds, if you will take OVID's † word for it.

. . . . recens tellus, seductaque nuper ab alto
 Aethere, cognati retinebat semina coeli.

He was made in the image of the gods, and his very form denoted his divine original.

* Lib. v.

† Metam. L. i.

Os homini sublime dedit, coelumque tueri
Jussit &c.

Some of these writers degrade even the human mind, and that intelligence and reason wherein we triumph. PLATO, who, in one mood, raises man up to the contemplation of the abstract forms of all things, sends him in another for instruction to the beasts of the field : and the Hospes in the Politicus reckons their conversation among the means of improvement in philosophy and the knowledge of nature which men enjoyed under the reign of SATURN. MONTAGNE, another prose-poet, deals with man as divines deal with God ; and having drawn down human nature as low as he could, he raises that of some other animals so high, that he ascribes a sense of religion to elephants, and represents them deep in meditation and contemplation before the rising sun, and attentive, at certain hours of the day, to perform certain acts of devotion. He took this from PLINY* : and he might have added, on the same authority, among other excellencies, that they understood the language of their country, loved glory, and were great moralists ; a commendation seldom due to men, “ quae etiam in homine rara.” But COTTA, in the third book Of the nature of the gods, goes so far as to assert that human reason, far from being an advantage, is a disadvantage, to man, the worst present that heaven could make him, and one of the plagues of human life,

* Lib. viii. c. 1.

“ Peſ.

“ Pestifera multis, admodum paucis salutaris.” The academician complains that it is bountifully and largely bestowed, “ tam munifice et tam large dari.” But the whole chorus of theistical philosophers and of divines boast it to be the distinguishing gift of God to man, that which gives him a pre-eminence and a right of command over his fellow creatures. OVID * calls him for this reason, “ sanctius his animal:” and the Stoic, whom COTTA answered, had not only distinguished him from other animals, but coupled him with the gods. The sole beings, who have reason, are gods and men. . . . “ dii et homines quibus profecto nihil est melius,” In a word, metaphysicians have refined and subtilised their discourses on this favorite theme into a jargon which has no meaning at all, or a blasphemous meaning: and they would stand justly exposed to the ridicule of common sense, if common sense could resolve to laugh at blasphemy. There have been those who taught that the human is a portion of the divine soul. Others † have been more modest, and have allowed that the former is a created being, “ creatura quae mens dicitur rationalis,” but a being of so high an order, that there is none superior, except the Supreme Being, and that these two are more closely and intimately united than the human soul is to the body it informs.

THERE is a middle point between these extremes, where the truth lies: and he who seeks ^{¶ Ib, †} PORPHYRY, PLOTINUS, ST. AUSTIN, MALBRANCHE.

it may find it. He will not find what the principle of divine, or even of human intelligence is. But he will soon find that the distance between them, whatever they are, is so immense, as to admit in reality no degree of comparison. He will find, on the other hand, many such degrees between the human intelligence and that of various animals. He may be induced- perhaps to think that intellectual faculties and corporeal senses, of the same and of different kinds, are communicated, in some proportion or other, to the whole race of animals : but he will be still conscious of his superiority, as they themselves are most apparently, such of them at least as know mankind ; not the sagacious elephant alone, who submits to his service, but the lion and the tyger, who make him occasionally their prey.

MAN is then the principal inhabitant of this planet, a being superior to all the rest. But will it follow from hence, that the system, wherein this planet rolls, or even this planet alone, was made for the sake of man? Will it follow that infinite wisdom had no other end in making man, than that of making an happy creature? Surely not. The suppositions are arbitrary, and the consequences absurd. There is no pretence to say that we have any more right to complain of the evils which affect our state, than our fellow creatures of the evils which affect theirs, or which are common to both. Many of them have plainly some foresight of the future, and of physical

fical effects, more than we have. But all of them feel the present. Because God has given us intellectual powers superior to theirs, to them more instinct perhaps, to us more reason certainly, is he cruel and unjust because he has not given us invulnerable and impeccable natures? By reason we learn to avoid, or to soften, or to remedy, many evils to which we are exposed. By reason we ought to learn to bear such as can be neither avoided, nor softened, nor cured. If we employ our reason only to aggravate these evils in our imaginations, and to complain more loudly, far from having a better right to do so, we are on this very account just so much the more impertinent and absurd.

THE whole tribe of divines assert, that the goodness of God required he should make the world for the sake of man, and man purposely to make an happy creature. Those among them, who rise higher in metaphysics, assert " that God can act " for himself alone, and can create rational beings " for no reason but that of being known and loved " by them *." Now I, who know just as much of this matter as all or any of these dogmatical persons, deny, on my own authority, what they affirm, on theirs; and, whilst they pretend arrogantly to demonstrate, will presume modestly and diffidently to guess. What they say, hangs ill together: I leave it to them to reconcile, among

* Vid. MALS. Preface to the Recherche, &c.

a multitude of other inconsistencies ; and shall only observe, on the latter part, since we reason on human ideas, for we have no others whereon to reason, that they who advance it entertain a very false notion of beneficence. An heathen moralist would have taught them better. No one confers a benefit, who has himself and his own interest and satisfaction alone in view, “ *Si una dandi causa est se intueri ac commodum suum, illud non beneficium sed foenus est.* ” From hence SENeca * concludes, that all the benefits we receive from God, are truly benefits ; since God can reap no advantage to himself in bestowing them, and would, therefore, bestow none, if utility to himself could be his motive. “ *Nam si una beneficij dandi causa sit dantis utilitas, nulla autem ex nobis utilitas Deo speranda est, nulla Deo dandi beneficij causa est.* ”

But the former part of what is asserted on this occasion by divines requires much more discourse. They, who assert that man and the happiness of man were the final causes of the creation, seem to have ideas no better determined of goodness, than the others of beneficence ; for if there be not a certain proportion kept in the exercise of it, the seeming goodness of the heart is really the weakness of the mind. You see at once what numberless instances might be produced to exemplify this truth. Let me ask now the greatest flatterers of human nature, what proportion there is between

* Lib. iv.

the excellencies of it, and the goodness of God, that should determine his infinite wisdom to judge it essential to his goodness, when he resolved to make man, to make a planet the more for the habitation of this ideal creature? The habitation is fit for him, and he is fitted to live in it. He could not exist in any other. But will it follow, that the planet was made for him, not he for the planet? The ass would be scorched in Venus or Mercury, and be frozen in Jupiter or Saturn. Will it follow that this temperate planet was made for him, to bray and to eat thistles in it?

BUT I hear the divine reply, that man is a rational being, far superior to the brute creation, and alone more worthy, than all of them, to be the final cause of the world he and they inhabit. That he alone has reason, may be too much to grant, since several of the faculties, in the exercise of which it consists, are exercised by other animals, as every man, who is not Cartesian enough to believe more than DES CARTES believed himself, must allow. But whether the difference of that, which is called reason in man, and the intelligence of other animals, be in kind or in degree only, one way or other certain it is, that his superiority over them is very real and very great, according to all our ideas of order. It was this consideration, and this partial comparison of him with the creatures of his own system, that made the human pass for the first of all rational natures, after the divine, among those who had no suspicion

cion of any others. Such were the narrow and confined ideas, which it appears by sacred as well as profane philosophy, that all the ancients entertained of the works of God. Modern discoveries in astronomy have presented them to us in a more noble scene. We cannot doubt, that numberless worlds and systems of worlds compose this amazing whole, the universe; and as little, I think, that the planets, which roll about our sun, or those which roll about a multitude of others, are inhabited by living creatures fit to be the inhabitants of them. When we have this view before our eyes, can we be stupid or impertinent and vain enough to imagine, that we stand alone or foremost among rational created beings; we, who must be conscious, unless we are mad and have lost the use of our reason, of the imperfection of our reason? Shall we not be persuaded rather, that as there is a gradation of sense and intelligence here from animal beings imperceptible to us, for their minuteness, without the help of microscopes and even with them, up to man, in whom, though this be their highest stage, sense and intelligence stop short and remain very imperfect; so there is a gradation from man, through various forms of sense, intelligence, and reason, up to beings who cannot be known by us because of their distance from us, and whose rank in the intellectual system is even above our conceptions? This system, as well as the corporeal, that is, the whole physical or natural system, for such the two properly are, must have been alike present to the divine mind before

before he made them to exist. If we assume, therefore, that he made this world for the sake of man, we must assume a fortiori that he made every other world for the sake of the rational inhabitants he designed to place in it.

Now it seems to me to follow from this hypothesis very absurdly, that one of these systems was made in mere subserviency to the other: whereas it is certainly agreeable to the clearest and most distinct ideas we are able to frame of the proceedings of infinite wisdom, to believe that each of them was made in some degree of subserviency, and the animal system perhaps in the greatest, to the other; and that both of them were made on some greater motive, and for some greater purpose, whatever these were, than either. It might be observed, as another absurdity, that according to this hypothesis the whole universe was made for some minute parts of it; and that the divine architect of nature proceeded in an unnatural method, making the whole relatively to these, instead of making these and all the other parts relatively to the whole. But I chuse rather to pass it over, and to observe that the hypothesis I oppose is not only unreasonable in speculation, but evidently contradicted by the phaenomena. Nothing in truth can be so preposterous as the conduct of the divine and atheist appears to be, whilst they deplore the miserable state of mankind, and the evils that abound in a world which they assume was made for the sake of mankind.

BOTH of them reason a priori from assumed moral attributes of the divinity. So they call their method of reasoning: and such it is in a false sense. It cannot be such in a true one; since their ideas of these attributes are very human ideas, applied arbitrarily to the divine nature, not founded in any knowledge of it that they have really. No matter. They have accustomed men to this absurd imposition, and they proceed. Both of them pretend to be led, from proposition to proposition, down to their different conclusions. But the truth is, that they have their different conclusions from the first in view. The premises, wherein they concur so amicably, are plainly contrived to establish such notions of the moral attributes of God, as shall appear repugnant to what we see, and feel, and know, when they are applied to the constitution of the world and to the state of mankind in it: whereas it is from this constitution and this state alone that we can acquire any ideas of the divine attributes, or a right to affirm any thing about them. When they have done this, a COLLINS concludes, that there is no God; and a CLARKE, that there is a future state of rewards and punishments.

LET us proceed in another method, argue from knowledge, not from imagination, and advance nothing more than the former will justify. The former will justify enough to refute abundantly the two allies.

XLIII.

THE demonstration of God's existence is founded in knowledge, and pursued with intuitive certainty through every step of it. This the divine will admit; and this the atheist is so little able to deny, that he has recourse to cavil, as it has been said already, and endeavours vainly to unravel the thread he cannot break. I assume, therefore, nothing more than what is proved; when I assert that the Supreme Being is infinitely wise, as well as powerful: and if he be infinitely wise, I need not stand to prove that he always knows, and always does, that which is fittest to be done. To chuse the best end, and to proportion the means to it, is the very definition of wisdom. Two things are then evident. One, that, since infinite wisdom determined to call into existence every being that does exist, and to constitute that universal system, which we call the system of nature, it was right and fit that infinite power should be exercised for this purpose. The other, that, since infinite wisdom not only established the end, but directed the means, the system of the universe must be necessarily the best of all possible systems: which it could not be, nor even a consistent scheme, unless the whole was the final cause of every part, and no one nor more parts the final causes of the whole. The universe is an immense aggregate of systems. Every one of these, if we may judge by our own, contains several; and every one of these

again, if we may judge by our own, is made up of a multitude of different modes of being, animated and inanimated, thinking and unthinking, rational and irrational; different natures designed for different purposes, but all concurring in that of one common system: as we discern in too many instances not to have reason to believe it in all. Just so it is with respect to the various systems, and systems of systems, that compose the universe. As distant as they are, and as different as we may imagine them to be, they are all tied together by relations and connections, by gradations and dependencies. The great material parts of our solar system act on one another in more ways than philosophy has been yet able to discover; and that of comets is not, perhaps, the only communication that other systems have with ours. Unthinking matter is dispersed in various forms throughout the universe: and we see a gradation of them in the world we inhabit, from stones and other inert bodies, up to vegetables and such as have in themselves, however inanimate, a natural, tho' not spontaneous, activity. So may we believe most reasonably, that various forms of thinking substance, or the faculties of sense and thought in various degrees, are dispersed likewise throughout the universe. We observe a gradation of them here, and we may well persuade ourselves that there is a gradation of them through various ranks of beings, from the lowest degrees in our world to the highest in some other.

I PRETEND not to dogmatise: but without having so much presumption I may say, that the notions here advanced seem much more conformable to those of a Supreme Being, and to all our ideas of order, than the contrary. They are probable in speculation, and the appearances of things are favourable to them: whilst the hypothesis that assumes the world, and did formerly assume the whole universe, made for man, and man solely to be happy, is not founded in reason, and is contradicted by experience. By the constitution of the material, and by that of the intellectual world, more dependent on the former perhaps than we are willing to believe, the human race is exposed to various evils, permanent and contingent, physical and moral. Of this philosophers have complained in all ages. This they could not reconcile to the goodness and justice of a God, such as they conceived him, nor on their principles: and therefore, they cut the knot by denying him, or threw themselves into an endless labyrinth of disputation by the acknowledgement of him. But on such principles as are here laid down, and in the truth of things most certainly, there is no ground for complaint, and there is abundant cause to give thanks. Tho' this world, and much more the universe, were not made for the sake of man, and tho' infinite wisdom contrived, and infinite power executed, the stupendous work for some nobler end, and some greater purpose, than the advantage of one poor vain mortal creature; yet has not

the care of man been neglected in it. "In prima illa constitutione," says SENECA * speaking of the world as the work of the gods, "cum universa disponerent, etiam nostra viderunt, rationem que hominis habuerunt;" which opinion, so little consistent with the doctrine he teaches elsewhere, is far more reasonable. We labor hard, we complicate various means, to arrive at one end: and several systems of conduct are often employed by us to bring about some one paultry purpose. But God neither contrives, nor executes, like man. His means are simple, his purposes various: and the same system, that answers the greatest, answers the least. Thus regard has been had to man, and not to him alone, but to all other animals, according to their different natures and ends.

INFINITE wisdom appears every where. Every new discovery, and how many and how marvellous have these been! is a new proof of this wisdom, as well as of the power, of God. The power of executing is seen in every instance; and tho' we cannot discern the wisdom of contrivance and direction, which are more remote from our observation, in every instance, yet we see them in so many, that it becomes the highest absurdity not to acknowledge them in all. They, who do not acknowledge them so, judge of the proceedings of an all-perfect Being (for even the atheist disputes, on this occasion, for argument's sake, on the supposition that there is one) as they would not judge

* *De b^cnef.* L. vi.

of those of a prince or minister of state, who had acquired and deserved, by a long course of political conduct, the reputation of wisdom. These they would not dare to pronounce unwise in any case, because they saw the measures imperfectly, and because the ends were unknown to them. Yet thus they judge with respect to God. "Why does the rain pour down into the sea, whilst the sandy deserts of Lybia are parched with drought? "Why do wintry storms happen in the summer, "and irregular seasons destroy our harvests?" Such questions as these have been often asked, and all of them relatively to man. They have been answered in many instances by new discoveries, after the deaths of those who asked them: and posterity has been convinced, tho' they did not live to be so, that when they triumphed in them, they triumphed in their ignorance. DEMOCRITUS, EPICURUS, STRATO, ALPHONSUS of Castile, in short all the makers and menders of worlds, shewed nothing but their ignorance and their presumption. They attempted to rise above God, and they are become the jest of mankind.

THOUGH I think that the moral attributes of the Supreme Being are absorbed, as I expressed myself before, in his wisdom; that we should consider them only as different modifications of this physical attribute, whatever ideas we may frame on the phaenomena; and that we must always talk precariously and impertinently when we presume to apply our ideas of them to the appearances of

things; yet I think it proper to shew the divine and the atheist that even the goodness of God is not hard to defend against them both, by every one who denies, as every one may most reasonably, the question they beg, and grant, in consequence of their alliance, to one another.

THE wisdom is not so often discernible by us, as the power of God; nor the goodness, as the wisdom. But a multitude of the phaenomena being conformable to our ideas of goodness, we may reason about it as we did just now about the divine wisdom. If our adversaries shew that men are exposed to many physical and moral evils, we can shew much more good of both kinds that God has bestowed on us, or put it into our power to procure to ourselves. The evils we complain of are constant or occasional effects of the constitution of a world that was not made for our sakes. But the means to soften some, to prevent others, and to palliate and even to cure those that cannot be prevented, are so many instances of the positive goodness of God, which ought to be brought to account, and set against the evils, with greater gratitude, and more fairly, than they are by men who pass them lightly over, whilst they descend into every particular of the other sort, aggravate the least, and declaim pathetically and partially on all.

IT would be easy to confirm and illustrate what is advanced, in the physical part, by numerous and unanswerable

unanswerable proofs, which are to be found in the writings of natural philosophers. These men have done more service to true theism, than all the metaphysical reasoners a priori; or, to say something stronger and equally true, they have done it more service, than divines and atheists in confederacy have done it hurt. It is impossible to read, with attention and without prejudice, what the former have writ, and not to be convinced by fact, and by reason grounded on fact, not on hypothesis, first, that we ought to consider the world we inhabit no otherwise than as a little wheel in our solar system; nor our solar system any otherwise than as a little but larger wheel in the immense machine of the universe; and both the one and the other necessary perhaps to the motion of the whole and to the pre-ordained revolutions in it: nor, without being convinced, secondly, that the wisdom, or, if you had rather say so, the goodness, of God has provided amply for the well-being of man in this world, and of the whole animal kind, who are objects of the divine care as well as he, according to their various destinations. In fine, and to take away every atheistical subterfuge; whether we say that the several species of animals were the final causes of those things which seem particularly adapted to the use of each; or whether we say that the world was made such as it is, without any regard to them; the proofs of divine wisdom and goodness will be equally strong: for if the world was made for the universe only, and without any regard to it's future inhabitants, this wisdom and
goodness

goodness were exercised as much in fitting these inhabitants to live commodiously in a world already made, as they could have been in making a world on purpose for them.

BUT we are not to think in this manner of the divine proceedings, nor to imagine that in them one plan succeeded another. Both were alike present to the mind of God. Our planet might have been, even uninhabited, very fit for all the mechanical purposes of it in the material system. But there might be other purposes, which the creation of animals was necessary to answer: and since they were created, we ought to think that they were so for some purpose. It might be determined in the divine ideas, that there should be a gradation of life and intellect throughout the universe. In this case, it was necessary that there should be some creatures at our pitch of rationality, and others endued with all the degrees of life, sense, and intellect, which we observe in the several species from the insect up to man. This world might be allotted to such kinds and orders of animated beings: and tho' it was made for the universe, not for them, some regard might be had to them, and to their well being in the constitution of it. They were not made to be miserable. But even man was not made to be happier than it was consistent with this part of the material system, and with his own rank in the intellectual, that he should be.

XLIV.

THE truth is, that when we contemplate the phaenomena, we cannot fail to discern, unless we live in a mist of metaphysics, how repugnant to them it is to affirm that the world was made for the sake of man alone. Some modern divines have been candid enough to give up the point. Archbishop KING at least, in his *Essay on the original of evil*, saw so plainly that even the natural and real attributes of God, even his wisdom and his power, could not be otherwise defended against the cavils of atheism and of theology, that he scrupled not to declare the opinion to be absurd, and what no one would object, who was not blinded with pride and ignorance.* But we discern at the same time in the contemplation of the phaenomena, that this world is accommodated in certain respects to the utility of the animals it contains, and that their natures are adapted in many more to the nature of the world. Thus the oblique position of the earth, by the inclination of it's axis to the plane of the ecliptic, makes a more equal distribution of the sun's heat throughout the year, and in the different zones or climates, than there could be in any other position. Thus, again, men and all other species of animals are fitted for different climates and different elements, wherein they find the nourishment and the employment proper to their dif-

* Chap. iv. sec. 2.

ferent

ferent natures. The animal kind may seem to be a final cause of the first. The constitution of the world is evidently the reason of the last. I descend into no more particulars. You will find an abundance of them collected by RAY, DERHAM, NIEUNTYT, and other writers, wherein the power and wisdom of God in the whole creation are displayed : and such proofs are brought that man and every species of the animal kind are fitted, in their very formation, for their state here, as nothing but the most irrational obstinacy can resist. The minutest instances are decisive : and those which seem the most obvious, because the most common, appear on a closer inspection not less astonishing than the greatest phaenomena, and the more remote from observation. The animal eye, for instance, is not less astonishing in it's various situations, motions, and particular uses, than the eye of the world the sun. To these writings let me refer you. Natural philosophy, thus applied, leads irresistibly to natural theology ; and gives a just contempt for the figments and hypotheses of artificial. Read, contemplate, adore, give thanks, and be resigned.

METHINKS I hear a sincere and devout theist, in the midst of such meditations as these, cry out, " No ; the world was not made for man, " nor man only to be happy. The objections urged by atheists and divines against the wisdom and goodness of the Supreme Being, on these arbitrary suppositions, destroy their own foundations,

“ dations. Mankind is exposed, as well as
“ other animals, to many inconveniences and
“ to various evils, by the constitution of the
“ world. The world was not, therefore, made
“ for him, nor he only to be happy. But he en-
“ joys numberless benefits, by the fitness of his na-
“ ture to this constitution, unasked, unmerited,
“ freely bestowed. He returns, like other ani-
“ mals, to the dust; yet neither he nor they
“ are willing to leave the state wherein they are
“ placed here. The wisdom and the goodness of
“ God are therefore manifest. I thank thee, O
“ my Creator! that I am placed in a rank, low
“ in the whole order of being, but the first in
“ that animal system to which I belong: a rank
“ wherein I am made capable of knowing thee,
“ and of discovering thy will, the perfection of
“ my own nature, and the means of my own
“ happiness. Far be it from me to repine at my
“ present state, like those who deny thee; or
“ like those who own thee, only to censure thy
“ works, and the dispensations of thy providence.
“ May I enjoy thankfully the benefits bestow-
“ on me by thy divine liberality. May I
“ suffer the evils, to which I stand exposed,
“ patiently, nay willingly. None of thy creatures
“ are made to be perfectly happy, like thy-
“ self; nor did thy goodness require that they
“ should be so. Such of them, as are more wor-
“ thy objects of it than thy human creatures, su-
“ perior natures that inhabit other worlds, may
“ be affected in some degree or other by physical
“ evils, since these are effects of the general laws
“ of

“ of matter and motion. They must be affected
 “ too in some degree or other by moral evil, since
 “ moral evil is the consequence of error as well
 “ as of disorderly appetites and passions, and
 “ since error is the consequence of imperfect un-
 “ derstanding. Less of this evil may prevail
 “ among them. But all that is finite, the most
 “ exalted intelligences, must be liable to some
 “ errors. Thou, O God! art alone that being
 “ who is liable to none, and to whom infallibility
 “ and impeccability belong.

“ *Duc me, parens celsique dominator pōñ;*
 “ *Quocumque placuit. Nulla parendi mora est.*
 “ *Affum impiger.”**

SHALL we suppose now that an atheist and a divine break in upon the theist, and interrupt his pious meditations by insisting still, like the echoes of EPICURUS, that if there is a God he must be infinitely good, as well as wise and powerful; and by asking then, how it comes to pass that there is any evil in the world? How it comes to pass that the happiness of man is not more complete, and better provided for, in it? Our theist would not be embarrassed. His answer would be more ready than their reply. Their first absurdity consists in this, that they apply their notions of goodness to the divine nature: and the second is this, that the argument they raise on these notions proves a great deal too much. Enough has been said concerning the first; and if the theist reasons on

* SEN. EP. 107.

their

their notions of divine goodness it is merely ex abundantia. But he will expose the second, by observing that if goodness ought to be, as they assume, the sole directing principle in this case, and if wisdom ought to contrive, and power to execute under this direction, the happiness of man ought to be proportionable to the goodness of God, that is, infinite: than which no greater absurdity can be conceived.' But if we assume, in opposition to these confederates, that divine wisdom, whereof we have ideas much better determined than we have of divine goodness, ought to be deemed in this, as in every other case, the directing principle of divine conduct; it will follow, without any absurdity, nay most agreeably to the reason of things, that the effect may be proportionable to the cause, that is infinite. It implies contradiction to say, that God should have made a creature infinitely happy, as happy as himself. But it implies none to say, that he made a system of creation infinitely wise, and the best of all possible systems.

AFTER this, our theist would be apt to make many just reproaches to the two confederates. He would reproach the atheist with his spirit of cavil and the unfairness of his proceedings. You pretend, would he say, that you cannot believe a God, because you cannot reconcile many appearances, nor the state of mankind in general, to your notions of goodness. But on your principles you would not acknowledge him, if the proofs

proofs of his goodness were as clear, as uniform, and as numerous, as those of his wisdom; for even to these you do not yield. These, however, are conformable to the notions of wisdom you must have, if you have any at all. You may cavil about the proofs of his goodness, and produce instances that seem repugnant to it, and that would be so if your hypothesis was true. But the proofs of his wisdom have nothing equivocal nor problematical in them, upon any hypothesis. You can produce no instances that even seem to be repugnant to it. Whilst natural philosophy was ill cultivated, and ill understood, indeed men founded their objections to the wisdom of God in their ignorance. But since the noble science has been improved by experiment and geometry, since greater discoveries of the causes and effects of the phænomena in the œconomy of the world have been made, every new discovery has been a new proof of the wisdom of God, and it has shined conspicuous in the very instances brought against it.

IT is a vain undertaking to go about to convince men of the goodness of God, who are obstinate enough to resist such evident demonstrations of his wisdom, or not to see that an all-perfect Being must always be determined by the harmonious concurrence of all his perfections; and not in one instance by his goodness, in another by his justice, and so on. When we say, that he is infinitely wise, we mean that he does on every occasion that

that which is fittest to be done; and it would imply contradiction to assert this, and to deny the other. But, however, the theist might go one step further in reproaches to the atheist: With what face, might he say to him, can you object to the goodness of God, that men are exposed to general evils, to tempests, to earthquakes, to famine, to pestilence, as well as to particular evils, to pain, to sickness, and to violent death? Is God not good, because they are exposed to evils that result necessarily from the constitution of a world, which, if we should allow it to have been made for man, was made for the universe too; and to all of which evils they expose themselves voluntarily for no other reason, than to indulge the ruling passion of their minds, and to fate their ambition or their avarice, for instance, if these were to be fated? God has given us means, as I said above, to avoid, or to palliate, or to cure, these evils in many cases. But men court them. The evils, that may be said to come from God, are, for the most part, soon over. The greatest of these calamities are seldom renewed; and few men have been, I suppose, exposed to the plague twice, or involved twice in the ruins of an earthquake. But ambition, avarice, and other ruling passions, are never fated: and the same persons expose themselves anew and continually to all the evils that accompany the pursuit of them. The theist might conclude this head very properly, by saying to the atheist: These evils, which you found so highly and with so ill a grace, for the reasons that have

been given, must be contingent effects of the constitution of the world, or they must be caused by particular directions. Take your choice. If you say the first, you say nothing that is inconsistent with the goodness of a Creator and Governor, whilst you confirm my hypothesis, that this world was made for the universe, not for man. If you say the last, you contradict yourself: you own that there is a God, and you acknowledge his providence.

THE same theist might press his two adversaries, the atheist and the divine both, in this manner still further. If you say, that God has not created the best of all possible systems in creating the universe, you deny that infinite wisdom which you, the divine, assert, and the proofs of which you, as well as I, have challenged the atheist to controvert. If you say, that he has, you must either cease your complaints, or you must continue to complain on one of these two principles, that the Creator ought to have established a system that was not the best relatively to the whole of his design, that is to the universe, but the best relatively to man; or else that he ought to have created no such being as man. Thus you are driven from absurdity to absurdity; for thus you do something more absurd, if possible, than a direct denial of the wisdom of God would be. One of you admits, and the other cannot controvert this wisdom: and then you both assert, that he should not have acted conformably to it. His good-

goodness should have controlled his wisdom. He should have changed the order of the universe, or he should have broke the chain of intellectual beings. Such an assumed conduct may be conformable to your ideas of goodness. But the ideas of God, if we may ascribe ideas to him, no more than his ways, are not those of man: and, besides, such a conduct as this, even in human affairs, can answer no ideas, but those of weakness, frailty, prepossession, and partiality. These, therefore, you would ascribe to the all-perfect Being, such is your impiety; one of you, that he may have a pretence to doubt of God's existence; the other, that he may have a pretence to be dogmatical about the designs of God, and the future dispensations of his providence.

XLV.

IT may be said that the theist argues hypothetically in defence of the divine attributes, like the atheist and divine who attack them. Now that he argues in some sort hypothetically, I agree. But that he argues in any sort like them, I deny. An hypothesis, which the phaenomena contradict, or which is inconsistent even with one of them, is not admissible. An hypothesis, which they all concur to establish, is scarce an hypothesis. The goodness of God required that this world should be made for the sake of man, and he only to be happy, is an hypothesis of the first kind. That the goodness of God did not require

this, and that his wisdom required something else, since it appears in his works that something else has been done, and since his works, which must be always conformable to his attributes, can alone enable us to judge concerning these; this, I say, is scarce an hypothesis. It is founded in fact, and is agreeable to our clearest and most distinct ideas. The atheist and the divine argue, from what they do not know, against what they do know: and in order to make the imposition pass, they trifle grossly between two methods of reasoning. One proves a posteriori that there is a first intelligent cause of all things. The other supposes it. After this, they attempt to prove a priori that there is a necessary connection between the wisdom and power of this being, and his goodness and justice, which are, they say, in him, the very same that they are in our ideas. After this, they return again to the former method, and attempt to prove a posteriori, that he is neither good nor just. The theist employs no such artifice. He reasons uniformly, from the works of God, to his existence and his attributes: and, reasoning in this manner, he raises no objection to either, and is able to defend both.

I HAVE spoke often of the pride of man, as the cause of many errors in philosophy, and especially in the first philosophy. It has no doubt a share in determining the atheist to the opinions that have been mentioned. But the atheist has another motive. His great aim is to free his mind

mind from the belief that there is any Supreme Being. He struggles hard against demonstration, and catches at every hypothesis that may give him a pretence to doubt. Such a pretence he finds in that which assumes notions of the moral attributes of God, and of his designs in favor of man; and then opposes the phaenomena to these notions. He has, on this occasion, the very singular advantage we have observed, that many of his adversaries agree with him in the premises, help him to establish them, and defend the cause of theism very ill against his conclusions afterwards. Divines, who do in effect no less than betray this cause to him, have likewise their private motive. They are unwilling to lower, on any account, their notions of human worth and importance, or of the designs of God in favor of man; and for that reason, since these notions cannot be maintained on the appearances of things that are, they have endeavoured, in all ages, and in all religions, to maintain them on the supposition of things that may be: and the whole force of human imagination has been employed to sooth human pride. Much of what the pagans advanced hypothetically to keep up these notions, in opposition to universal experience, is indeed no longer hypothetical; since it has been admitted into christianity. It is not hypothetical, I mean, when it is considered as a matter of revelation; for it is as hypothetical as ever, when it is considered as an object of reason. Let us leave it then respectfully to revelation, which is sufficient, or nothing

can be so, to support it. Let us not employ our reason about things which she must either disown, or prostitute herself to maintain. Let us not employ her to multiply, or to improve hypotheses. Let us employ her in a manner to want none: and that we shall do effectually, if we keep her within those bounds, which God has prescribed by revealing in his works so much, and no more, of natural theology, and of natural religion, as he thought it necessary for us to know.

THESE precautions are the more fit to be taken, because tho' our religion forbids pride, and teaches humility, yet the whole system of it tends to inspire the former into all those who are not able to discern the consistency of particular precepts and of the system; which I presume that very few are. According to this system, man was not only made in the image of God, but the world and he were so made that his happiness seemed to be the final cause of the whole. He fell, indeed, from this state; but God, who suffered him to fall rather than to restrain him in the exercise of his free will, determined instantly to raise him again, by the sacrifice of his own Son: whilst he abandoned myriads of fallen angels to the fatal consequences of their revolt, without any hopes of redemption. Is it possible to conceive higher notions of a created being, than these revealed truths must inspire? PLATO asserted, on his exalted notions of the Supreme Being, that immortality was communicated by a sort of physical necessity

necessity to every creature that this Being himself created. Christian philosophers might be led more easily from the exalted notions of human nature, which these revealed truths inspire, to imagine that happiness was to be communicated by a sort of moral necessity to such a creature as man. Allow me one instance more. The Israelites were one of the least, and least worthy, nations upon earth. Yet God chose them, according to the same system, by a wonderful predilection, for his favourite people, preferred them to all the people of the earth, and assigned them a country flowing with milk and honey. May not christian philosophers have been led, by this example, to believe that God preferred mankind to all other intellectual creatures, and made a particular world for them, as he assigned a particular country to the Israelites? The facts, tho' received in theology, are not, indeed, applicable to philosophy. But when the mind is once tinctured by them, and an habit contracted of reasoning from them, any thing, that appears analogous to them, will be the more easily admitted.

XLVI.

THE confederacy between atheists and divines appears to have been carried very far, by what has been said already. I have chose, in the reflections that have been made to account for the physical and moral evil that is in the world, and to defend the attributes of God, to go up

to the source of all the false reasoning about them; rather than to insist on the topics that are commonly employed: and I hope that the method I have taken is not the worse for being shorter, plainer, and less metaphysical. I must confess that I do not see, how the cause of God can be effectually pleaded on this head any other way. But there is another head, on which it must be pleaded likewise: for the antitheistical confederacy does not end here. Lest the bare existence of evil should not afford the atheist color enough to deny the being of God, nor the divine a sufficient foundation whereon to erect, by the seeming authority of reason, that system of another world, which is, and always has been, of great advantage to him in this, they proceed to consider these evils in the distribution of them. The supposed injustice of this distribution has been ever in their mouths a subject of accusation, not to say of invective, against the providence of God: and they have been heard with partiality of two kinds, that of love, and that of aversion, in their favor. The good that happens to themselves, and to those with whom they are intimately connected by sentiment, by interest, and often by both, is an object of one partiality among men. The evil, that happens to these, is an object of the other. The order is reversed, when persons we disapprove, or who stand in opposition to our sentiments or interests, are concerned. We hate the good, and we love the evil, that happens to them. Great advantage has been taken of these

natural dispositions to attack successfully the divine providence in human opinion. But here, indeed, the alliance between the atheist and the divine breaks off. The former concludes directly, that there is no God. The latter, after all he has done to favour this opinion indirectly, maintains still that there is one. How well the premises common to both, and their opposite conclusions, are founded, let us examine. I fear, that the atheist will appear to that reason, to which they both appeal, more consistent in his absurdity, than the divine.

I THINK I have said, that artificial theology betrays the cause of God, how sincerely and how piously soever some of the professors of it may direct their intentions: and, if I have said so, I shall not recal my words. If these men had left the atheists to assert alone, both vainly and foolishly, that divine goodness required the world should be made for the sake of man, and that God could have no other motive to create him, except that of communicating happiness to him, they might have defended this goodness sufficiently, as I hope it has been shewn; and the divine justice too, as, I hope, it will be shewn. They would have had no after game to play, nor any contradictions to reconcile. The Stoicks would not have been obliged to deny that to be evil, which they and every one else felt to be evil: nor the christians to rest their defence on this proposition, that the first designs of God were appointed

appointed by the fall of man; which cannot be conceived by reason, and which the atheist will not admit on the authority of revelation, or rather of a moral, philosophical, egyptian allegory. But when they reasoned on the same principles, as the atheist reasoned, down to his conclusion exclusively, they left themselves no pretence for not concurring in the same conclusion, but that of an hypothesis, and of an hypothesis which cannot, if it is admitted, effectually discharge the goodness, nor justice of God, at the tribunal of reason. Thus it seems plain to me, that they betray the cause of God; for they undermine it: and if the hypothesis fails, that truth, which was raised on demonstration, fails with it, or totters on so precarious a support.

To such a risque at least does artificial theology, as it is employed in this case, expose the first principle of all religion: and we may apply to the schools, that teach it, what ARISTO of Chios said of some schools of philosophy. As caution was to be used lest men should go debauched out of the school of ARISTIPPUS, or morose out of that of ZENO, so caution should be used lest men go infidels out of the schools of christianity. A few reflections will shew that the risque I mention is not imaginary, but very real. No doctrines were ever inculcated more strongly on the minds of men, nor enforced by more authority, than those of a future state. The institutors of religions, and the priests of these religions, were care-

careful to establish and to maintain them in belief. They excited devotion, multiplied observances, and increased offerings. By them, the religious society has governed principally in all ages: and if the priests of Egypt undertook to conduct men in the way of the gods, in the difficult road, in the ineffable paths, and through the brazen gates that lead to the mansions of the blessed;* we may quote priests in the pale of christianity, at this time, who undertake to save men from hell, to deliver them from purgatory, and to conduct them to heaven through the gates whereof St. PETER has the keys; as well as others who make some of the same pretensions, and who scruple not to declare, that, if this doctrine be taken away, all difference between good and bad is taken away, and there is no such thing as religion left. To this authority we must add that of legislators and magistrates, who have, for political purposes, authorised the same doctrines, solemnised them by religious institutions, like those of the eleusinian mysteries, confirmed them by laws, and set education, the great nurse of theological opinions, on their side. These are great advantages: and yet we do not find that this doctrine ever had an effect suitable to them, or to the importance of it. Remote considerations, tho' they are believed, have not indeed the same influence that immediate objects have. But they have an influence proportionable to the belief of them: and they must have this influence, especially in a case like this, where the

* EUSEB. Praep. evan. Lib. ix. cap. 10.

punishments held out are unavoidable, and no man can hope, as every man does in all other cases, to escape them.

I do not say, that to believe a future state is to believe a vulgar error; but this I say, it cannot be demonstrated by reason: it is not in the nature of it capable of demonstration, and no one ever returned that irremovable way, to give us an assurance of the fact. It was, therefore, originally an hypothesis; and it may, therefore, be a vulgar error. It was taken upon trust by the people who first adopted it, and made prevalent by art and industry among the vulgar who never examine, till it came to be doubted, disputed, and denied by such as did examine. It was made, like many other opinions that had no better foundations, subservient to philosophical systems, and political institutions. It was advanced in answer to the great atheistical argument, drawn from the prosperity of wicked men. It was applied to enforce human laws, by divine and temporary rewards and punishments, by the fear of others more grievous, and more lasting, to procure greater authority to governors and more submission from the governed. It was communicated from Egypt, the mother of good policy as well as of superstition, to Greece. The luxuriant imaginations of that people improved it, and the *mythologia de inferis* became a favourite theme of their poets, of *ORPHEUS*, of *HOMER*, and so downwards even to their dramatic writers. There seems likewise to have been a custom

custom then, not very unlike to that which prevailed about two centuries ago in the christian church generally, and much later, I believe, in Spain, the custom I mean of acting mysteries. Such these representations were called by the heathens, and the same kind of religious fopperies retained the same name among christians.

BUT that which gave the greatest credit to this doctrine, and spread it most, was the authority of HOMER and PLATO. The former was gravely quoted by philosophers, as a philosopher, an historian, and a divine; and all as properly, no doubt, as the latter. The Romans took this doctrine and these mysteries from the Greeks: and the Greeks carried them back, when they conquered Asia and Egypt, to the countries from whence they had received them. HOMER and PLATO were in the zenith of their glory at the time of ALEXANDER's expedition, and they continued to be so in the reigns of his successors. Whether the Jews, who began about, or a little before, this time to have schools, and to engrift from foreign stocks on their own law, might not have taken the first hints of a future state from some of their neighbours, I know not. But it is most probable that this doctrine was not known, or at least not taught, amongst them, till the disputes in their schools gave a rife to the sects of Sadducees and Pharisees in their church. The most considerable persons, the richest, says JOSEPHUS, adhered to the Sadducees, who adhered so strictly to the law of MOSES, that they could

not admit a doctrine whereof there appeared no traces in it; and therefore denied the resurrection. The Pharisees or the separatists, on the other hand, were ready to admit things marvellous in doctrine, and superstitious in practice; to reconcile them, if they could, to the written, or to justify them by an oral, law: for no expedient serves the purpose of innovators better than that of a blind tradition. All this was proper to strike the multitude: and the multitude followed the Pharisees. Thus the doctrine of a future state, and even of a transmigration of souls,滑 into the system of judaism before the coming of CHRIST: and yet they who adopted this doctrine then had no better authority for it, than that of egyptian priests, greek poets, and pythagorean and plato-
nic hypotheses.

TRUE it is that the immortality of the soul, and future rewards and punishments, some parts of what philosophers and poets had imagined, were sanctified by revelation soon afterwards. Thus sanctified, they deserve our respect, and challenge the implicit belief of every christian. Thus, and thus alone, they are maintained in opinion; and not by the futile reasonings of divines with which we have to do here. These are called demonstrations by the men who make them, and who triumph in them as if they were sufficient of themselves and must convince by their own evidence. But the truth is, they would have little effect on the minds of men, if they did not pass for super-
abund-

abundant proofs of what is made certain by revelation, and if the respect that men pay to revelation did not screen these reasoners from being attacked so directly, and in so many ways, as they would be otherwise, and as they deserve to be, for presuming to rest all religion both natural and revealed on their metaphysical refinements, and their abstract reasonings a priori.

THE most zealous asserters of a Supreme Being, the warmest defenders of his providence, and they who were the most persuaded of the necessity of a religion to preserve morality, and the good order of civil government, were far from this presumption. Some of them rather hoped, than believed, the immortality of the soul: and if they admitted a future state, they laughed at the old women's tales, the aniles fabulae, of an hell and the furies. They either rejected the doctrine, or they admitted it by halves. It was not only problematical in the opinions of theistical philosophers, but it seems, in several instances, to have had little hold on vulgar opinion; notwithstanding the means that had been used to inculcate it. One instance, and a remarkable one it is, shall be given. TULLY,* in a public pleading, wherein we may assure ourselves that he was careful to let nothing fall, that might be an occasion of scandal by contradicting and ridiculing the religious established opinions, speaking of OPPIANICUS, who had been condemned only to banishment, and, after saying that he

* *Orat. pro. A. CLUEN.*

should

should have killed himself, adds—“ nam nunc
 “ quidem (OPPIANICUS was then dead in his
 exile) “ quid tandem illi mali mors attulit? Nisi
 “ forte ineptiis ac fabulis ducimur ut existimemus
 “ illum apud inferos impiorum supplicia perferre
 “ . . . actum esse praecipitem in sceleratorum se-
 “ dem atque regionem. Quae si falsa sint, id
 “ quod omnes intelligunt, quid ei tandem mors
 “ eripuit praeter sensum doloris?”

THE use I make of this deduction is to shew that, the doctrine of future rewards and punishments having been precariously established, and neither generally nor entirely believed by those who believed the existence of God on better foundations, there is a real danger to this first principle of all religion, arising from the hypothesis against which I contend. Reason, experience, and self-consciousness, prove to me that a man may be thoroughly convinced that there is a supreme and self-existent Being of infinite power and wisdom, without subscribing to such notions of his moral attributes as divines would impose, or believing them any more capable, than himself, of determining what these attributes required that God should do. But I can easily conceive, at the same time, that by eloquent discourses on the dignity of human nature, and the misery of human kind, by the cajolement of appeals to his passions and to his senses, this man may be induced to think that the misery of mankind overbalances their happiness in general,

general,* and that in particular the criminal have many times the lot of the innocent, and the innocent that of the criminal: from whence he may conclude, that God is an unjust and cruel Being, and deals unreasonably with his creatures, unless he has given them immortal souls, and there be another world wherein he makes proper amends to the good, at least for what they have suffered in this. The man is brought to the very brink of the precipice. He cannot believe a God unjust, cruel, unreasonable: but he may find it as difficult to believe a God who acts against his attributes, and the perfections of his nature, in one system, only to have a reason the more for acting agreeably to them in another. In a word, he may be led by theology, if he does not start back and revert to his former ways of thinking, from theism into atheism. DES CARTES and his followers have been justly censured for resting the truth of God's existence on their favorite proof, drawn from the idea which they assume that the mind can frame of an all-perfect Being, and neglecting or even rejecting every other. Divines are justly liable to the same censure: for tho' they admit all the proofs that establish this great truth, yet they rest the validity of them ultimately on the hypothesis here mentioned, and expose such, as cannot take this hypothesis for a demonstration, to the danger of mistaking the demonstrations for hypotheses.

Relig. of nat. delineated, pag. 205. et. seq.

XLVII.

THIS danger, great as it is, appears to such a divine as CLARKE, or is represented by him, to be none at all. He, who does not believe the immoral attributes of the Supreme Being to be just such, as the doctor conceives them, and as essential to the divine nature as the natural attributes, has the doctor's consent to believe no God at all. This is the angular stone of artificial theology. Grant to the divine that these attributes and the eternal reason of things are such as he conceives them to be, and he will raise whatever schemes he pleases of divine economy. He will shew you what God was, and is, obliged to do as creator and governor of the world, * and what he must do to correct his first plan, to set the disorders and inequalities of it right, and to make the whole design appear at it's consummation, what it does not appear at present, a design worthy of infinite wisdom, justice, and goodness. Refuse to grant what he assumes, and proves nothing with all his pomp of argument, and airs of demonstration. This profane application and impudent abuse of reason is grown so common, that they who are guilty of it do not perceive it to be what it is; and that every little smatterer in artificial theology, who clammers up into a pulpit, talks of the nature, attributes, and providence of the supreme, ineffa-

* Demonstration, p. 131.

ble,

ble, incomprehensible Being with such assurance, as would be unpardonable presumption in angels and archangels themselves.

How should it be less? How should finite measure infinite? God's manner of knowing is ours no more, than his manner of being. At least, I think, that one of these propositions may be reduced, as well as the other, to absurdity. But if his manner of knowing could be supposed, without absurdity, the same, would it not be still absurd to suppose the objects of omniscience as confined, as the objects of human science? And yet they must be so, if the eternal reason of things, by which the divine wisdom conducts them all, be just the same as it appears to be to the understanding of every rational being, and if God appeals to man himself for his conduct towards man. When God communicates any knowledge to any of his creatures, it is such as he thinks necessary for them; and it is, therefore, communicated in a manner proportionable to their conceptions. Thus he has communicated to mankind in his works some knowledge of himself, more of the world they inhabit, and still more of their state, their duty, and their interest in it. What he has not given them the means of knowing according to their manner of knowing, they are ignorant of: and, therefore, tho' the particular reasons and final causes of some few things relatively to themselves, and to their system, are known to them, yet even these are in many more instances unknown; and the reasons,

relatively to God, for constituting these and all other things as they are constituted, can be known to God alone, who sees them intuitively in himself, who is himself the eternal reason. They cannot be objects of human understanding; for they are not conceivable by human ideas: and it is impossible to hear men with patience, when they endeavour to palm upon us, most impertinently, their notions of glory and honour for instance, and to make them pass for the motives that determine God.

We receive ideas from sensation and reflection; and we frame others by the several operations of our minds about these. Our minds have no other objects when they exercise the power of thinking, whatever that be. These ideas do not go far into the extent of being; nor our power of thinking, by consequence: and even in this extent our most simple ideas are sometimes fallacious, our most complex always unsteady, and many of them imperfect and inadequate, confused and obscure. There is somewhat more. Our knowledge does not extend even to all our ideas. Let me borrow two examples from Mr. LOCKE. " We have the ideas of a square, a circle, and equality; and yet shall never be able, perhaps, to find a circle equal to a square, and to know certainly that it is so. We have the ideas of matter and thinking; but possibly shall never be able to know whether any mere material being thinks or no." In like manner, and far more strongly, it may be said,

said, that, supposing us to have ideas of divine wisdom, goodness, and justice, there will be various phaenomena still, whereof we may have very clear and distinct ideas, and wherein we shall be never able to discover how wisdom co-incides with goodness or justice, nor be able to make the application of the phaenomena to the attributes. Thus the case would stand, supposing our ideas of these attributes in God as adequate as our ideas of a square, a circle, equality, matter, and thought; But it grows much stronger when we consider how inadequate our ideas of these attributes must necessarily be, not only on account of the infinite distance between the divine and human nature, but on account of the numberless and to us unknown relations, respectively to all which the divine providence acts; which, if we did know them, we should be unable to compare, and in which, therefore, the harmony of divine perfections would not be discernible by us. Upon the whole matter, we may conclude, safely from error, and in direct opposition to CLARKE, that goodness and justice in God cannot be conceived, without manifest presumption and impiety, to be "the same as in the " ideas we frame of these perfections when we consider them in men, or when we reason about them abstractly in themselves; but that in the " supreme Governor of the world they are some- " thing transcendent, and of which we cannot " make any true judgment, nor argue with any " certainty about them."

THUS I think: and, if I wanted any authority to justify me, I could find it in Dr. BARROW, and in St. PAUL, whom I quote rather as a theologian, than an inspired apostle, since we consider this whole matter on principles of reason, and not of revelation. The former begins his sermon, on a text taken from the epistle of the latter to the Romans,* “ How unsearchable are his judgments, “ and his ways past finding out ? ” by observing that when God rejected the greatest part of his antient people, for their refusal to embrace the gospel, and took the gentiles into his favor, the advocates of judaism argued against this proceeding from their ideas of wisdom, as well as of justice, and the other moral attributes. “ This proceeding, they said, argued his former affection to them to have been misplaced. It impleaded his antient covenant, and law, of imperfection. It supplanted his own designs. It unravelled all that he had been doing for many ages.” St. PAUL answered the advocates of judaism by other arguments, taken from “ ideas of general equity, of the nature of God, of his attributes, of his relations to men, &c. But after he had steered his discourse through all these rocks,” which, I presume, would have been such for CLARKE, if they were such for St. PAUL, “ he thought it safe to cast anchor, that is, to wind up the contest, in this modest intimation, that whatever he could say might not perhaps exhaust the diffi-

"culty, nor void all scruple; and that, therefore, in this, and in all such cases, for entire satisfaction we should have recourse to the incomprehensible wisdom of God, who frequently, in the course of his providence, ordereth things in methods transcending our ability to discover or trace." St. PAUL did not pretend that his manner of accounting, for rejecting the Jews and calling in the gentiles, was an infallible demonstration, certain and necessary, even as certain as the attributes of God. Much less did he affirm that if his arguments, concerning the dispensations of providence, were not a demonstration, there was no demonstration of the being of God: and yet, surely, besides the difference between the apostle of the gentiles, and the minister of St. James's, it could not be harder to prove that the rejection of the Jews, and the vocation of the gentiles were consistent with the goodness and justice of God, than to prove that a future state of rewards and punishments is necessary to justify his attributes, and to render his dispensations in this world consistent with them.

DR. BARROW proceeds to consider several reasons, why we cannot clearly discern the entire congruity of providential dispensations to the divine attributes, as he expresses himself in another place. He could not cut the knot at once, nor bring the same charge, as we have done, directly against the presumption of men of his own order. He was a divine, he was a preacher, he was to keep up the

cant of the pulpit. He gives, therefore, some reasons of a prudential kind, which may have determined God to veil his face with a cloud, and to wrap up his power in some obscurity: such for instance as these, that he may not confound our weak sight, that he may exalt our faith, that he may appear God indeed, or that we may be well assured concerning a future account, and forced in our thoughts to recur thither for a resolution of all emergent doubts and difficulties. Such flimsy stuff is a man like this obliged to vend, when he has put on a black gown and a band. But he lays his stress on another kind of reasoning, and such as is truly decisive. "As the dealings of very " " wise," he says, and we may add, of very just and good, men, "are sometimes founded upon " " maxims, and admit justifications, not obvious " " nor penetrable by vulgar conceit, so may God act " " according to rules of wisdom and justice which " " it may be quite impossible by our faculties to ap- " " prehend, or with our means to descry. As there " " are natural modes of being and operation . . . so " " there may be prudential and moral rules of pro- " " ceeding, far above our reach . . . peculiar ob- " " jects of divine wisdom, and not to be understood " " by any creature . . . especially by creatures who " " stand in the lowest form of intelligence, one re- " " move from beasts . . . In fine, those rules of " " equity and experience which we in our transac- " " tions with one another do use . . . if they be ap- " " plied to the dealings of God, will be found very " " incongruous or deficient, the case being vastly al- " " tered

“ tered from that infinite distance in nature and state between God and us, and from the immense differences which his relations towards us have from our relations to one another.” These two great divines are, you see, on my side. They are both of the same opinion that CLARKE censures: and, if his censures were as just as they are dogmatical, St. PAUL himself would be one of those men who take, in reality, the moral attributes of God entirely away, and who may on the same grounds deny his natural attributes*.

XLVIII.

IT is time to have done with CLARKE, especially since I leave this part of the argument in much better hands than my own, in those of Dr. BARRON and St. PAUL, who deny to him the very principle from which, as from a common source, all the accusations of providence are deduced by him, by many other divines, and by the whole tribe of atheists. I proceed to take notice of another writer, and to examine another of those assumptions which are employed by these men, whether divines or atheists, to maintain their charge. That we are very incompetent judges of the moral attributes of God and of the eternal reason of things; that it is unpardonable presumption in us to pronounce what both or either of them required that God should do in the original constitution of our system, or requires that he should do in the government of it; these truths, I say, are so evident,

* Evidences, p. 26.

that

that he, who denies them, does not deserve to be argued against any longer. "Quae perspicua sunt longa esse non debent." The determination of them should in reason determine the whole dispute. Infinite wisdom and infinite power have made things as they are: how goodness and justice required that they should be made, is neither *co-rum* judice, nor to any rational purpose to enquire. For greater satisfaction, however, it may not be amiss to shew that neither the state of mankind in this life, in general, nor the lot of good and bad men, in particular, are such as they have been represented to serve the purposes of some persons; and that, if they were such, the hypothesis of a life to come would not restore by reason the goodness and justice, which these men endeavour to destroy by appeals to reason and to passion.

THE solemn author of the Religion of nature delineated, whom CLARKE had in his eye perhaps, when he described his fourth sort of theists, whether this treatise had been then published or not, places himself on the same bench with MINOS. MINOS was the son of JUPITER, and the disciple of his father. So PLATO calls him, in order to insinuate, as I believe, that nothing less than the wisdom of the Supreme Being was sufficient for the task assigned to this infernal judge. But I think, on recollection, that I must recall my words, and say that WOLLASTON places himself far above MINOS. He judges God as well as man. Departed souls appear at the tribunal of the other, where

where they are punished for the evil they have done, or recompensed for the evil they have suffered, in this world. But he erects this court of judicature, establishes the general laws of it, as he judges the perfections of the divine nature required that they should be established ; and distinguishes, and weighs the kinds of happiness, or misery, that fall to the share of different men ; clear, and mixed happiness, avoidable, and unavoidable misery in the whole, or avoidable so far that the creature would chuse rather to bear the remainder than miss the proportion of happiness : all which must come into consideration with the good and the evil men have done, at that judgment seat, where they are to be tried after death for what they have done in life,

IN his attempt to prove, from the nature of an all-perfect Being, that God created the human soul immortal, because the mortality of it does not consist with reason, this author has the temerity to assert that he, who says the contrary, must say in consequence either that God is unreasonable, unjust, and cruel, or that no man has a greater share of misery unavoidable than of happiness*. Nay further, the existence of an all-perfect Being depends so much, according to this theist, on the hypothesis of a future state †, that one single instance of unfortunate virtue and of prosperous wickedness in this world would be to him a sufficient argument for such a state. His reason is,

* P. 200.

† P. 205.

that

that God cannot be unjust nor unreasonable in any one instance ; which is undoubtedly true. But on this supposition he would be so in one instance, if there was no future state. One instance of these kinds, therefore, would have been to WOLLASTON a demonstration against the existence of an all-perfect Being, without the hypothesis of such a state. This is strange theism. Artificial theology is neither more dogmatical, nor more absurd : and the belief of God's existence hangs by a twine in both.

To support this hypothesis, he gives a most exaggerated description of the misfortunes to which particular men are liable in this world, and a very ridiculous as well as exaggerated description of the general, and usual slate of mankind ; both which are assumed to be inconsistent with the idea of a reasonable cause. Let us consider the last first, as the natural order seems to require. Whilst the CLARKES and WOLLASTONS of the age accuse the providence of God by arguments drawn from his nature, and from the eternal reason of things, both as imperfectly known to them as to you and me ; let us defend this providence by arguments, drawn from the nature of man, and the actual constitution of the world, both equally well known to them and to us. Instead of hearkening to them, let us hearken to God who speaks to us in his works ; and instead of pronouncing what it was right for him to do, believe all he has done, for that very reason, right. Let us be prepared to.

to meet with several appearances, which we cannot explain, nor therefore reconcile to the ideas we endeavour to form of the divine perfections. But let us remember too that as the pretended science of the men, against whom we dispute, exposes them to error, and as they render the great truths of theism doubtful, or at least perplexed, by blending them up in an imaginary scheme of divine economy ; so we may be secure from error by a modest avowal of ignorance, where human knowledge ceases : and as the imperfections of created Beings prove them to be created, not self-existent, so the very deficiencies of the knowledge we have will be so many proofs of it's truth. They must be necessarily such ; for if it be true that infinite wisdom and infinite power created and govern the universe, it cannot but follow that some of the phaenomena may be proportionable, and that others must be disproportional, to our, and to every other, finite understanding.

XLIX.

HAVING premised what I thought proper in this place, I observe that the representation, made of the general state of mankind, proves nothing, or proves too much. It proves nothing if a gradation of animal beings appeared necessary or fit in the divines ideas, that is, to speak less platonically and more rationally, to the supreme or divine reason and intention ; for in that case

case why should not we be the creatures we are? It proves, or attempts to prove, too much, if it be intended to prove that there is; or that there should have been, no such chain of Being: for as we see that there is one almost from nonentity up to man, and have the most probable reasons to persuade us that it continues up to natures infinitely below the divine, but vastly superior to the human; so there is surely no metaphysical nor theological presumption mad enough to assert that we are capable of knowing what the constitution, order, and harmony of an universe require.

BUT now, whether such a gradation of being goes through the whole universe, or whether it be confined to our planet and stops at man, as the ignorance and pride of antient philosophers induced them to believe; why is not the general state of mankind consistent with the idea of a reasonable cause? This reasonable cause may have produced such creatures as we are either relatively to that chain, whereof we make a necessary link, or independently of it, and on other motives at which it is impossible we should even guess. When objections are made to such things as appear inconsistent with the perfections of an all-perfect Being in the Bible, the divine's answer is that of St. PAUL, O altitudo! The same divine objects to the works of God, and will not be answered by the same exclamation. My ignorance is made a sufficient reason for submitting implicitly to whatever I find in this book, as agree-

agreeable to the perfections of the Deity ; and yet my ignorance is not allowed to be a reason for submitting in the same manner to whatever I find in the book of nature that God has actually done, as agreeable to these perfections. This may be called very justly theological effrontery in the divine ; and it is at least as absurd in the theist to ask, whether the conditions of humanity, the various objects which men pursue, and the various scenes of their lives from the cradle to the grave, compose an end worthy a first cause perfectly reasonable ? The learned author might have asked with far less impropriety, whether the lowest employments, to which legislators and magistrates subject some of the persons they govern in political societies, compose an end worthy of them ? The answer would be, that, considered by themselves, they do not ; but that, considered as parts of a general system, wherein the most minute are necessary to make the whole complete, they do ; and that, even considered by themselves, they are worthy at least of the persons to whom they are assigned.

IN what I have written to you about human knowledge, I have insisted on one observation, which I will recall, and apply to the present case. The present case will justify the observation, and both together will discover very clearly the principal source from which all the perplexity, and all the tedious disputes concerning the origin of evil, and the supposed unjust dispensations of providence,

dence, as well as most other metaphysical and indeterminable questions, have arisen. The synthetical method of reasoning by arguments *a priori*, that is by arguments deduced from principles assumed to be evident, is very commodious for many philosophical and theological purposes. But it may lead us imperceptibly into error, and we can never be sure that it leads us to truth, unless these principles are self evident, or unless their evidence be demonstrated by the analytical method, that is, by arguments *a posteriori*, that is, by tracing it up from the known phaenomena. Now, it happens unfortunately for truth, that philosophers and divines catch at certain principles through levity; through a too implicit confidence, or through design, and argue dogmatically from them in the synthetical method, without a due regard to the analytical. Thus, for instance, the wisdom of God does not appear alike in all the phaenomena; but as far, as we can discover, it appears in the greatest and the least; to our astonishment; and the proofs of it multiply in an exact proportion to our discoveries; whilst no one of these can be strained into a repugnancy to it, for if any of them could, the case would be altered extremely. This wisdom, therefore, is established by the analytical method; and we may reason safely from our ideas of it in the synthetical. But the same cannot be said of the moral attributes, which we ascribe to the Supreme Being according to our ideas of them. The superiority we have over the rest of the animals, that are our fellow inhabitants

tants of this world, which is imaginary, perhaps, in some respects, and real, without doubt, on the whole, and several particular phaenomena, wherein virtue is rewarded and vice punished, give us these ideas. Now, whether the phaenomena that give them, even those wherein the final causes are the most apparent, and the most immediately relative to man, are to be deemed effects of the divine goodness and justice in any other sense; than some of the same and several others are to be deemed effects of the divine goodness to the several species of animals; or whether they are all effects of the divine wisdom exerting itself in every part relatively to the whole, may be disputed. But it cannot be disputed, and all sides agree, that many of the phaenomena are repugnant to these ideas of goodness and justice. They, therefore, who proceed on these principles, that goodness in God is just what we conceive it to be in our dealing with one another and in our abstract notions of it, and that justice is the same; that he made the world for the sake of man; that he made man only to communicate happiness to him; and that every one, who acts in contradiction to this happiness, must be rigorously punished by God himself, are so far from demonstrating, that they have not the merit of framing a good hypothesis; since no hypothesis, which is contradicted evidently by any one of the phaenomena, can be received as such; and since it is in vain that they endeavour to rectify one by another, and to maintain the second by the very proofs

that destroy the first. If the first fails, the second cannot stand; and he who expects to be believed when he asserts what the phaenomena can neither depose for, nor against, because he finds no other way to maintain what he had asserted in opposition to them, expects a great deal more than reason will grant him.

WHAT has been said seems to be extremely plain: and they would conclude in this manner on any other occasion, who are not ashamed to do the very contrary on this. By setting themselves free from the restraints of the analytical method, these reasoners *a priori* resemble very much one sort of madmen. Some of these are so very mad that they lose all use of their reason, and are as little able to deduce consequences as they are to establish principles. Others, again, deduce consequences, and argue very justly, but are still mad; because they reason from principles that have no appearance of reality out of their own over-heated and disordered imaginations. You will find instances of this kind without the trouble of going to Bedlam. You will find them in every form of life, even among those who are reputed sober and wise, and who really are such, except on some one particular subject. But you will find them principally in colleges and schools, where different sects have rendered this sort of madness, which is occasional elsewhere, both epidemical and traditional. Few have been mad like *Don Quixote*, whilst multitudes have been, and are, as mad

mad in different walks of science, as the danish cabalist who instructed BORRI. The man had great parts, was learned, was devout. He reasoned extremely well; but he reasoned, like the rest of his sect, on the supposition of an elementary people and on other cabalistical principles. Atheists seem to me to deserve a place among the first sort of madmen, and I apprehend that many divines and theists ought to be ranked among the second.

THEY who approach the charm are exposed to the enchantment. How should they escape who are bred up in it? I call it an enchantment; and I think that men who have great strength of genius, and great warmth of imagination, are often the most liable to be affected by it. The analytical method is the surest road to truth; but it suits neither the purpose nor the temper of such philosophers. Where it may carry them they know not. It will carry them to truth, if it be well pursued: but it may carry them to truth that is inconsistent with the doctrines they are engaged by prejudice, or interest, to maintain: and accordingly we see them fly off from it, like men who are afraid of their guide. It is troublesome and tedious; for it requires often a difficult and long induction of particulars: and they are in haste to arrive at science, or what they take for science. It stops, in many cases, short, and disappoints their curiosity. They scorn to stop where it stops; and therefore they take a bold

leap, from certain ideas that seem to them clear and distinct, to the first principles of things; as FONTENELLE says of DES CARTES, foolishly to be sure, since he intended to make his panegyric, and to give him the preference to NEWTON.

ALL this may be applied to the persons we speak of here; and there is no subject, on which the enchantment has had so much force, nor has prevailed so long, as on this of the origin of evil, the moral attributes of God, and of the dispensations of providence. This was a chaos of metaphysical notions three thousand years ago, and it is so still. Some very able writers have endeavoured to account for the origin of evil consistently with the received notions of the moral attributes of God, and of his design in creating man; but I doubt that the two famous questions are still unanswered by them. " If there is a " God infinitely good as well as powerful, how " comes it that there is any such thing as evil in " the world? If he is infinitely just, how comes " it that the virtuous have a share, and sometimes " the greatest, of this evil?" The hypothesis of two principles, which had been invented by the most ancient of the eastern philosophers, and was revived by MANES, and others, contained many absurdities, and did not solve the difficulty; since it might be asked, why did the good God create man at all, if he could not create and govern him independently of the evil god? The hypothesis of the fall of man, for such it is under a philosophical

phical consideration, will serve the purpose as little; since it is impossible to render that assumed indulgence of God to the free-will of man, which defeated the original design of God, plunged man into a state of misery as soon as he was created, and obliged the divine goodness to have recourse to the expedient of a redemption by the blood of his own Son: since it is impossible, I say, to render this agreeable to our ideas of goodness, or even of wisdom.

THE first of these hypotheses has been exploded long ago. The second must be defended as well as it can, since it is made the foundation of the christian system. But however the introduction of evil may be accounted for by this sacred tradition, and by much ingenious argumentation to the reason of mankind; every divine, and several theists, endeavour to account for the existence and distribution of it by another hypothesis, which is as antient as either of the former, and which must have been invented, since it was not revealed to the Egyptians, and other people, any more than to the Israelites, not only for a political, but for a philosophical purpose, and to serve for an answer to the two atheistical questions. It is with this hypothesis, considered independently of revelation, that we have to do here. We are to examine whether it reconciles the phaenomena to the ideas we have of goodness and justice, by assuming that this world is nothing more than the porch or entry into another*.

* Religion of nature, p. 297.

L.

AS the men who maintain this hypothesis neglect the phaenomena when they pretend to determine the moral attributes of God, so they overstrain them with much affectation and unfairness when they pretend to demonstrate a future state. The author of the Religion of nature delineated, that I may mention one particularly, does this in such a manner that his exaggerations become burlesque*. According to him, " the general state of mankind is scarce consonant with the idea of a reasonable cause, because we are born with the labor of our mothers ; because we are liable to hunger, thirst, heat, cold, and indispensible positions of various kinds ; and because one generation drops off, and another springs up ; that is, because as we are born, so we die. Children, we trifle away our time at play ; or we are sent to school, and submitted to discipline. Men, we are exposed to difficulties, and surrounded with cares. There are inhuman or vicious husbands, false or peevish wives, refractory or unhappy children. Many can never obtain a comfortable livelihood ; many of those that do, break ; and even when their affairs go on prosperously, their families increase, and new occasions of solicitude are introduced by this increase. Under such grievances we lie during the best part of life ; and when we grow old we grow infirm. In short, physical and

* Ib. p. 206, 207, 209.

" moral

“ moral evil, intermixed with a few transitory and
“ uncertain enjoyments, not worth enjoying,
“ make up the whole system of our lives; at the
“ last stage of which, if we are not taken away
“ sooner by death, fainting, tottering, and bend-
“ ing to the earth, we fall into the grave of our-
“ selves.” Such, and far more miserable (for I
omit among others those who labor under incurable
distempers, and who subsist by begging, borrow-
ing, or shifts as bad as these) is the state of man-
kind represented to be; after which the pathetic
writer concludes, And must man end here? Is
this the period of his being? Is this all? The
author I quote is so transported by the torrent of
his eloquence, and by such reflections as these,
that he raises in his own mind what I think he
will raise in that of no sober reader, a sort of in-
dignation against the state wherein almighty God
has placed us, and against the order of his pro-
vidence. On this he grounds an expectation of
life and immortality in a better state, and, on
this expectation, an argument that there will be
such a state.

IN this rapture he retires to some solitary walk,
and there far from noise perhaps, but certainly
not free from prejudice, he meditates for our
instruction. “ He thinks himself sure that he is
“ above lifeless matter, above the vegetative
“ tribe, and above the sensitive animals that he
“ sees. He has not only immediate sensations,
“ but ideas, of an higher order. He can make

“ excursions into futurity ; he had almost said
“ that he could, by strict thinking, get into ano-
“ ther world beforehand. Can he be made capa-
“ ble of such great expectations only to be disap-
“ pointed at last ? Can he have such overtures
“ of immortality, if, after all, there is no such
“ thing ? He makes great improvements in know-
“ ledge which he has often no opportunity of
“ shewing here. Must they not be preparations
“ for another world, wherein he may shew them ?
“ Can the author of his reasoning faculties be
“ himself so unreasonable as to give them to no
“ purpose ? By the exaltation of his reason, and
“ by the practice of virtue, he approaches to an
“ higher manner of being, and taltes already
“ something spiritual, and above this world.
“ Must his private acts of religion be all lost ?
“ Can God have so little regard for him who has
“ so much for God ?”

IN this specimen, which is very faithfully ex-
tracted, we have an example of the second sort
of madness mentioned above. The man who
writ all this nonsense was a man of parts, of
learning, a philosopher, and a geometrician. But
he made one mistake in the delirium of metaphy-
sics. Instead of reasoning about a creature of
God’s, he reasoned about one of his own, creation.
When these learned lunatics conceive men to be
nearly what they are, they pull down the divinity
nearly to the same level, and frame their notions
of God’s proceedings with them on those of their

proceedings with one another. When they think more worthily of the Supreme Being, and raise their ideas of an all-perfect nature as high as they are able, they raise their ideas of the human nature in a certain proportion to these; so that God and man are, in all their reasonings, within degrees of comparison. Thus Mr. WOLLASTON has done in his truths relating to the deity, and in those relating to a private man. He raises our conceptions in the first as high, as they can be raised, and then loses himself, and leaves his reader to be lost, in the incomprehensibility of the divine nature, as they must needs be. He does not, indeed, flatter the human in the second as grossly, as some writers who endeavour to impose on us against the intuitive knowledge which every one may have of himself; but he insists so much on the spirituality and immortality of the soul, and on the unsuitableness of the condition to the importance of mankind, that he gives ground sufficient to stand upon to those fulsome panegyrists of humanity, who consider man as the image of God, the final cause of the creation, and the principal object among created beings, even above angels, of the divine care and solicitude.

BUT, after all their endeavours to make of man a being superior to the whole animal kind, rather than a superior species of the same kind, man will appear what he really is to every unprejudiced mind. In vain will they endeavour to persuade any

any such that the natural state of mankind is unnatural, if I may say so: that is, a state neither agreeable to the nature of God himself, nor to that nature wherewith he has dignified man. In vain will they endeavour to persuade any such that the conditions of humanity are imperfections in the system; and that, in the works of God, as in those of men, whatever falls short of the idea of the workman, or is not proportionate to the value of the materials he prepares in one essay, may be rectified in another instance. It is not only true, but obvious, that man is connected by his nature, and, therefore, by the design of the Author of all nature, with the whole tribe of animals; and so closely with some of them that the distance between his intellectual faculties and theirs, which constitutes as really, tho' not so sensibly as figure, the difference of species, appears, in many instances, small; and would probably appear still less, if we had the means of knowing their motives, as we have of observing their actions. The connection of all animal, and, by consequence, of human with vegetable life, is more remote. But there is such a connection; and it will be manifest to him who considers how vegetables are produced, how they grow up, how they ripen, florish for a time, wither and die; how many wants they have, such as nourishment, culture and shelter, for instance, as well as to how many distempers and injuries they are exposed, in all which circumstances their connections with the animal kind is too apparent to be denied. Though man is an animated material being

being capable of beginning motion, and of many other modifications of thought, both single, and in series ; yet, however these mental powers were communicated to him, and in degrees still more imperfect to other animals, his system and theirs are founded alike in mere matter : and when we look at them or at one another, the first ideas we receive are those of extension and figure, the parts of which like those of any other clod of earth, are liable to separation, and to a dissolution of the form. Nay, there is a further analogy between animated and inanimated bodies. The former have, by instinct, a sort of moral gravitation to one another, by which they adhere together in society. I will not apply instinct to the latter ; but this I may say, that a force as unknown as instinct produces a gravitation of the several parts of matter to each other, and keeps them together in a kind of physical society.

THE whole world, nay the whole universe, is filled with beings which are all connected in one immense design. The sensitive inhabitants of our globe, like the *dramatis personae*, have different characters, and are applied to different purposes of action in every scene. The several parts of the material world, like the machines of a theatre, were contrived not for the actors, but for the action : and the whole order and system of the drama would be disordered and spoiled, if any alteration was made in either. The nature of every creature, his manner of being, is adapted to his state here,

here, to the place he is to inhabit, and, as we may say, to the part he is to act. If man was a creature inferior or superior to what he is, he would be a very preposterous creature in this system. GULLIVER's horses made a very absurd figure in the place of men, and men would make one as absurd in the place of horses. I do not think that philosophers have shewn in every instance why every thing is what it is, and as it is, or that nothing could be in any one case otherwise than it is, without producing a greater inconveniency to the whole than the particular inconveniency that would be removed. But I am sure this has been proved in so many instances, that it is trifling, as well as profane, to deny it in any. We complain often of our senses, and sometimes of our reasoning faculties. Both are defective, weak, fallible: and yet, if the former were more extensive, more acute, and more nice, they would not answer the purposes of human life, they would be absolutely inconsistent with them. Just so, if our reasoning faculties were more perfect than they are, the order of intellectual beings would be broken unnecessarily, and man would be raised above his proper form, without any real advantage to himself, since the reason he has is sufficient for him in the state allotted to him; and since higher faculties, and greater degrees of knowledge would on one hand increase his presumption, and yet on the other would rather excite, than satiate, his curiosity, by shewing him more clearly the extent of his ignorance.

WOLLASTON pretends to reduce every one, who does not adopt the hypothesis of rewards and punishments in a future state, to this dilemma : “ No rational creature is unavoidably miserable, or “ God is an unreasonable and cruel being.” But, in the first place, who told this writer, or how does he know, that there are any rational creatures unavoidably miserable ? The whole story of mankind tells him so, and his own senses shew him that it is so ; and on these supposed authorities he makes such a state of misery to be that of almost all mankind. I might have said of all mankind absolutely : for though he allows that some are more, and some are less miserable than others ; yet in the enumeration he makes of unavoidable human miseries, he includes many that are unavoidable indeed, but that do not constitute misery, either when they come separately, or when several of them come together. They are inconveniences at most, to which every man is liable. Every man is liable to catch cold, and, like other animals, to be afflicted with various bodily distempers. Every man, and he most, who is deemed commonly to be the furthest removed from misery, is exposed to cares, to troubles, to disappointments, &c. Our author is fond on this occasion of the word misery, it carries a stronger idea along with it, and serves the purpose of exaggeration better. But what is misery ? Let us, who have no other purpose to serve than that of truth, determine our ideas with greater precision. As I take hap-

happiness to be a continued permanent series of agreeable sensations or of pleasure, so I take misery to be a continued permanent series of the contrary: and such misery has never been brought, I believe, on any man necessarily, and unavoidably, as a consequence of the general state wherein God has placed mankind.

PARTICULAR occasional evils, physical and moral, are consequences of this state, no doubt, and such as we are able to shew that they could not be prevented in the best of all material systems. The course of things rolls on through a vast variety of contingent events, for such they are to our apprehensions, according to the first impression of motion given to it, and under the direction of an universal providence. This perpetual flux, and the vicissitudes it creates, in what we call the fortune of men, bring along with them both good and evil. Human life is chequered variously with both; and as the good has often some alloy, so the evil is softened by many circumstances, even by habit, and above all, by hope, that cordial drop which sweetens every bitter portion, even the last.

THE saying of the Epicureans is true of all sorts of evil. If it is violent, it spends itself, or it puts an end soon to him who suffers it. If it is moderate, it is tolerable, it may be compensated, or the sense of it may wear out. Thus a dancing, drunken, smoking revel makes ample amends to the

the savage for all the wants he has suffered, and for all the pains and perils to which he has been exposed. Thus the galley slave sings whilst he is chained to an oar: and thus might they sing who worked in the golden mines of the Upper Egypt, and for whom, as well as their relations and poor children, Mr. WOLLASTON is moved to so much compassion. I should wonder, when he was in Egypt, that he did not quote a tradition from the Bible as well as from DIODORUS, if I did not consider that he gave probably more credit to the profane than to the sacred history, and lament the fate of the Israelites who were obliged to make bricks without straw, and whose backs were scourged by their task masters. The real evils, that men suffer, are not in truth so great as they appear in these exaggerated representations of them, and very often, perhaps, to the eye of a spectator: nay, the greatest of them are not greater than those which men impose voluntarily on themselves, whilst they complain loudly of evils far less, which the conditions of humanity impose on them. I might bring examples from those who row in galleys, or dig in mines, for hire; from those who condemn themselves to pass their whole lives in austeriorities like the fathers of La Trappe, or in torments like the Faquires of the east, on motives of superstition; from those in whom a turn of imagination can take off the fear of death, and make them court it before it's time, like the followers of ODIN, who sung the praise of it in their hymns, witness the ode of good king LODBROG, and

and had no better a reason for it than the hope of drinking beer in the sculls of their enemies at the palace of ODIN.

THUS do men frequently embrace, by choice, the very evils they complain of when they happen to them in the usual course of things, and sometimes even death itself, for which they have, by nature, the strongest aversion. Thus too they devote their whole lives to real and constant misery, which is no part of the general natural state of mankind. In short, their greatest evils are from themselves, not from God; which might be shewn in innumerable instances. True it is that they are sometimes involved in general calamities, which they can neither foresee nor prevent, such as inundations, earthquakes, pestilences, and the entire devastations of kingdoms or provinces by savage and barbarous people, like the Huns of old, or the Spaniards in later ages. But these calamities are rare. They may be considered as chastisements; for chastisements are reasonable when there are any to be amended by partaking in them, or by being, at least, spectators of them. They may be considered as the mere effects, natural tho' contingent, of matter and motion in a material system, put into motion under certain general laws. If they are seen in the first light, they should teach mankind to adore and to fear that providence which governs the world by particular as well as general dispensations. If they are seen in the second, they should suggest some

NECESSARY agents employ all their powers, conformably to the laws of nature, in promoting the same end, that is, in carrying on the physical system. So rational agents should employ all their faculties in preserving the order of the moral system; which reason discovers to be their common duty, and reason and experience to be their common interest. There are great deviations in both, with a double difference relatively to the state of mankind. The former are wholly independent, the latter in great measure dependent, on man, notwithstanding the strength of his passions, and the weakness of his reason. The former are not only rare, and the latter frequent; but the consequences of the latter become much more fatal to the happiness of mankind in general, than those of the former. From hence it results very evidently that the wisdom of God, which you may call his goodness, has given man, by what is in his power, very ample means to make himself amends for that which is out of his power. Atheists and divines find fault with the whole. They cannot, or they will not, conceive that the seeming imperfection of the parts is necessary to the real perfection of the whole. The entire scheme of the works of God must be altered to please them. Nothing, even inconvenient to these delicate persons, must be suffered in it. They must be physically invulnerable, and morally impeccable, or

the divine providence must interpose continually to shield every particular man from evils of one sort, and to check him, like the demon of SOCRATES, when he is about to commit those of another. This is all they modestly require: and of the want of this they complain perpetually; as they pretend, the divine at least does so, that they have a right to do, because God appeals to man for the equity of his proceedings.

LET us be convinced, however, in opposition to atheists and divines, that the general state of mankind in the present scheme of providence is a state not only tolerable, but happy. Without having WOLLASTON's balance, wherein he weighs happiness and misery even to grains and scruples, we may pronounce that there is much more good than evil in it; and prove what we pronounce even by his authority, and that of all those who deny it like him, if any such authority can be wanting. It is plain that every man has more good than evil in actual enjoyment, or in prospect, since every man prefers existing as he is to non-existence, and since none of them, not those who suffer the worst accidents in life, are willing to abandon it, and to go out of the state these declaimers represent to be so miserable. The proposition may be advanced thus generally, because there are very few examples to the contrary, and those are of men run mad by distemper, or made so by some prevailing enthusiasm. Neither will it avail to say that the desire of life and the fear of death are,

one the greatest imperfection, and the other the greatest evils, of our human state ; since, whatever they are, and from whence soever they arise, they would lessen in all cases, and cease in many, if the condition of mankind were truly such as it is represented. What our author's circumstances were of any kind I am ignorant. But whatever they were, I am persuaded, you will be of my opinion, that any charitable person who had offered to cut his throat, in order only to deliver him from the miseries he complained of in such lamentable terms, would have been very ill received. But I hasten to wind up and to conclude the hints, for they are no more, which occur to me, and which I think proper to give you concerning the general and usual state of mankind.

L1.

I SAY then, that if men come helpless into the world, like other animals ; if they require even longer, than other animals, to be nursed and educated by the tender instinct of their parents, and if they are able much later to provide for themselves ; it is because they have more to learn and more to do ; it is because they are prepared for a more improved state and for greater happiness. Sense and instinct direct all animals to their several ends. Some of them profit more by experience, acquire more knowledge, and think and reason better, than others both in different species and in the same. Man is at the head of these : he profits still more by experience, he acquires still

more knowledge, he thinks and reasons better, than all other animals: for he who is born too stupid to do so, is not a human creature; he sinks into an inferior species, tho' he be made after the image of man. Man is able by his intellectual superiority to foresee, and to provide more effectually against, the evils that threaten him, as well as to procure to himself the necessaries, the comforts, and the pleasures of life. All his natural wants are easily supplied, and God has proportioned them to the abilities of those who remain in the lowest form of rational creatures. The Tartar under his tent, and the savage in his hut enjoys them. Such is the general state of mankind. Of what then do we complain? His happiness exceeds that of his fellow creatures, at least as much as the dignity of his nature exceeds the dignity of theirs: and is not this enough?

We ought to think that it is enough: and yet God has done more for us. He has made us happy, and he has put it into our power to make ourselves happier by a due use of our reason, which leads us to the practice of moral virtue and of all the duties of society. We are designed to be social, not solitary, creatures. Mutual wants unite us: and natural benevolence and political order, on which our happiness depends, are founded in them. This is the law of our nature; and tho' every man is not able for different reasons to discern it, or discerning it to apply it, yet so many are able to do this, that they serve as guides to the rest.

rest. The rest submit, for the advantages they find in this submission. They learn by experience that servitude to law is real liberty ; and that the regulation of pleasure is real happiness. Pleasures are the objects of self love ; happiness that of reason. Reason is so far from depriving us of the first, that happiness consists in a series of them : and as this can be neither attained nor enjoyed securely out of society, a due use of our reason makes social and self love coincide, or even become in effect the same. The condition wherein we are born and bred, the very condition so much complained of, prepares us for this coincidence, the foundation of all human happiness ; and our whole nature, appetite, passion, and reason concur to promote it. As our parents loved themselves in us, so we love ourselves in our children, and in those to whom we are most nearly related by blood. Thus far instinct improves self love. Reason improves it further. We love ourselves in our neighbours, and in our friends too, with TULLY's leave ; for if friendship is formed by a kind of sympathy, it is cultivated by good offices. Reason proceeds. We love ourselves in loving the political body whose members we are ; and we love ourselves when we extend our benevolence to all mankind.

THESE are the genuine effects of reason, these are the purposes for which it was given us : and nothing more trifling, nor more absurd, can be found in the writings of those who have presumed

to censure the providence of God, than what TULLY puts into the mouth of COTTA, in the third book Of the nature of the gods, on this occasion. "I know not," is the pontiff made to say, "whether it had not been better for mankind to have had no reasoning faculties at all, "since they are hurtful to so many, and profit- "able to so few, than to have had them so boun- "tifully and so profusely bestowed *." Foolish and profane! Fire serves for several necessary uses, among the rest to warm us; and sensitive experience teaches us to distinguish between warming and burning, in the manner and degree wherein we employ it: shall we renounce the use of it, and complain that there is such an element, because it burns us when we employ it ill, or when we neglect, in employing it well, the precautions and attentions that are necessary? Just so (for we may transfer this material image to an intellectual subject much more properly, than such images are usually transferred to such subjects by metaphysicians) just so, I say, human reason is given for several necessary uses, and principally to lead us to all the happiness we are made capable of attaining by a proper application of it, which rational experience is sufficient to teach us. This comparison is more just, than that which COTTA

* Haud scio an melius fuerit humano generi motum istum celerem cogitationis, acumen, solertiam, quam rationem vocamus, quoniam pestifera sit multis, admodum paucis salutaris, non dari omnino, quam tam munifice, et cum large dari.

makes, and BAYLE has copied, of the Supreme Being to a physician, who prescribes wine to a patient that he knows will drink it too strong, and perish by the use of it. Neither the strength of our reason, nor the too frequent use of it, but the contrary, are to be apprehended: and if the sick man's wine must be mingled with water to do him good, reason, the *medicina animi*, must be employed pure and unmixed. The other similes, which these academicians employ, are as impertinent as this, and might be shewn very easily to be so, if it were worth our while. But no man, who is not already devoid of reason, will be induced by them to renounce this noble gift, wherein the dignity of our nature consists, because it becomes hurtful when we apply it ill; or through negligence, or through affectation, or through design, even when we apply it well. It was applied rather impertinently, than hurtfully, to maintain stoical apathy; for it was not given to destroy, but to direct and govern, the passions; to make them as beneficial as they are necessary in the human system; to make a *Piso* of a *CATILINE*,* and a *BRUTUS*, I mean the first, of a *CAESAR*. But it was applied very hurtfully, indeed, and it is so still by those who employ all the reason they have to corrupt the morals of men, to bribe, to seduce, to argue, to deceive, or to force them out of their properties, or their liberties, and to make a whole community become the vassals of a faction of men, or of one man. This in politics.

* *Frugi.*

In religion it was applied very hurtfully, and it is so still by atheists and divines, whilst the former endeavour by sophism and declamation to censure the works of God, and the order of his providence, to destroy the belief of his existence, and to banish all sense of religion ; and whilst the latter, who join very heartily in the same censure, would be thought to justify the divine attributes against the common accusation, and to promote the interests of religion by this justification.

A MOST unnecessary justification surely ! if they did not make it necessary ; since God leads us by the natural state, in which we stand at first, into the road of happiness, and leaves us to the conduct of a sufficient guide, that is, of our reason, afterwards. It would be false to say, as SENECA says, somewhere in one of the rants of the portic, that we owe our virtue to ourselves, not to God. It would be equally false to say, that we owe our happiness to ourselves, not to God. But this may be said with truth, that God, when he gave us reason, left us to our free-will to make a proper, or improper, use of it : so that we are obliged to our Creator for a certain rule and sufficient means of arriving at happiness, and have none to blame but ourselves, when we fail of it. It is not reason, but perverse will, that makes us fall short of attainable happiness. The rule is so certain, and the means so sufficient, that they who deviate from them are self-condemned at the time they do so ; for he, who breaks the laws of nature, or of his country,

country, will concur to preserve them inviolate from others. As a member of society, he acknowledges the general rule. As an individual, he endeavours to be a particular exception to it. He is determined in both cases by self-love. That active principle, inflaming and inflamed by his passions, presses on to the apparent good which is the object of them: and if reason, a less active principle, which, instead of impelling, requires to be impelled, and to whom it belongs to be consulted in the choice, as well as in the pursuit, of an object, is called in, it is called in too late, and is made the drudge of the will predetermined by passion. Thus it happens that self love and social are divided, and set in opposition to one another in the conduct of particular men, whilst, in the making laws, and in the regulation of government, they continue to be the same. As long as they do so, the happiness of mankind is abundantly provided for and secured, in their several societies; and, notwithstanding the physical evils to which the members of these societies may stand sometimes exposed, every reasonable man, every man who is not a disciple of such a whining philosopher as WOLLASTON, nor such a presumptuous divine as CLARKE, will confess that such a state is as happy, not only as human eye ever saw, or human ear ever heard, but as the heart of man can conceive to belong to humanity; and much more happy than creatures, but one degree above those whom they despise, could expect to be.

IT is true, indeed, that governments shift and change not only their administrations, but their forms. Good princes and magistrates carry on the work of God, and by making men better make them happier. When these are corrupt, the infection spreads. They corrupt the people, the people them: social love is extinguished, and passion divides those whom reason united. When the abuse is confined within certain bounds, the condition of many men may be happy, and that of all may be still tolerable: and when the abuse exceeds such degrees, and when confusion or oppression becomes intolerable, we are to consider that they who suffer deserve to suffer. Good government cannot grow excessively bad, nor liberty be turned into slavery, unless the body of a people co-operate to their own ruin. The laws, by which societies are governed, regard particulars: and individuals are rewarded, or punished, by men. But the laws, by which the moral as well as the physical world is governed, regard generals: and communities are rewarded or punished by God according to the nature of things in the ordinary course of his providence, and even without any extraordinary interposition. Look round the world antient and modern, you will observe the general state of mankind to increase in happiness, or decline to misery, as virtue or vice prevails in their several societies. Thus the author of nature has been pleased to constitute the human system; and he must be mad who thinks that any of the atheistical, theological, or philosophical makers,

makers, and menders of worlds, could have constituted it better. The saying of ALPHONSUS, king of Castile, who found so many faults in the construction of the material world that he pronounced himself able to have given the supreme architect a better plan, has been heard with horror by every theist: shall we hear without horror the men spoken of here, when they find fault with the moral, as well as physical plan; when they found accusations against the goodness, justice, and wisdom of God, merely on their pride; when they assume, on no other foundation, that man is, or ought to have been, the final cause of the creation, and rail as heartily at providence as PLUTARCH represents EPICURUS to have done; in short, when they go so far as to impute to God the introduction or permission of those very evils which neither God is answerable for, if I may use such an expression, nor nature, nor reason, but our own perverse wills, and the wrong elections we make?

I CANNOT hear any part of this without horror; and therefore if I had walked with WOLLASTON* in some retired field, my meditations would have been very different from his, more just and more reverential towards the Supreme Being. I should have been very sure that neither lifeless matter, nor the vegetative tribe have any reflex thoughts, nor any thoughts at all. I should have been convinced that the faculty of thinking is given to sensitive animals, as we call them, in a lower degree than to man.

* Ibid. p. 209.

But I should not have been convinced that they have the power of exercising it in respect of present objects only. The contrary would appear to me, on those ... of ... as manifest in them, or in some of them, as it appears on others, and on more, in the man who is born dumb. I should feel the superiority of my species, but I should acknowledge the community of our kind. I should rouse in my mind a grateful sense of these advantages above all others; that I am a creature capable of knowing, of adoring, and worshipping my creator, capable of discovering his will in the law of my nature, and capable of promoting my happiness by obeying it. I should acknowledge thankfully that I am able, by the superiority of my intellectual faculties, much better than my fellow creatures, to avoid some evils and to soften others, which are common to us and to them. I should confess that as I proved myself more rational than they by employing my reason to this purpose, so I should prove myself less rational by repining at my state here, and by complaining that there are any unavoidable evils. I should confess that neither perfect virtue, nor perfect happiness are to be found among the sons of men: and that we ought to judge of the continuance of one, as we may judge of our perseverance in the other, according to a maxim in the ethics of CONFUCIUS; not by this, that we never fall from either, since in that sense there would be no one good nor no one happy man in the world; but by this, that when we do fall we rise again, and

and pursue the journey of life in the same road. Let us pursue it contentedly, and learn that as the softest pillow, on which we can lay our heads, has been said by MONTAGNE to be ignorance, we may say more properly that it is resignation. He alone is happy, and he is truly so, who can say, Welcome life whatever it brings ! welcome death whatever it is ! " Aut transfert, aut finit." If the former, we change our state ; but we are still the creatures of the same God. He made us to be happy here. He may make us happier in another system of being. At least, this we are sure of, we shall be dealed with according to the perfections of his nature, not according to the imperfections of our own. Resignation in this instance cannot be hard to one who thinks worthily of God ; nor in the other, except to one who thinks too highly of man. That you, or I, or even WOLLASTON himself, should return to the earth from whence we came, to the dirt under our feet, or be mingled with the ashes of those herds and plants from which we drew nutrition whilst we lived, does not seem any indignity offered to our nature, since it is common to all the animal kind : and he, who complains of it as such, does not seem to have been set, by his reasoning faculties, so far above them in life, as to deserve not to be levelled with them at death. We were like them before our birth, that is nothing. So we shall be, on this hypothesis, like them too after our death, that is nothing. What hardship is done us ? None, unless it be an hardship, that we are not immortal,

because

because we wish to be so, and flatter ourselves with that expectation. As well might that emperor of China have complained of his disappointment, when he imagined he had bought immortality of a certain impostor, who pretended to give it, and then died. If this hypothesis were true, which I am far from assuming, I should have no reason to complain, tho', having tasted existence, I might abhor non-entity. Since then the first cannot be demonstrated by reason, nor the second be reconciled to my inward sentiment, let me take refuge in resignation at the last, as in every other, act of my life. Let others be solicitous about their future state, and frighten or flatter themselves as prejudice, imagination, bad health, or good health, nay a lowering day, or a clear sunshine, shall inspire them to do: let the tranquility of my mind rest on this immovable rock, that my future, as well as my present, state are ordered by an Almighty and Alwise Creator; and that they are equally foolish, and presumptuous, who make imaginary excursions into futurity, and who complain of the present.

THESE reflections on the general and usual state of mankind may be carried much further, and more may be added. But these are sufficient, and I proceed to plead the cause of God, on another head, against the same confederates.

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